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Thesis

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EGYPTIAN AND THE BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURES UPON THE HEBREW WISDOM LITERATURE

Submitted by

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THESIS OUTLINE

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"Egyptian Influence in the Book of Proverbs."
Vide his references also. He favors Heb dependency.
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THE INFLUENCE OF THE EGYPTIAN AND THE BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURES UPON THE HEBREW WISDOM LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

I. The Interpenetration of Cultures.

We have often heard it said that nations are like individuals and that that nation develops most that borrows most. "The most original of peoples appropriate most, drinking deeply from the common heritage of mankind".[1] We can have patience with those individuals and with those nations which take the best of that which they borrow and so thoroughly assimilate it that the stamp of the original source is blotted out. To accomplish such a thing requires skill and time, but the names of plagiarist and "copy-cat" are not just in such a case.

There was a time when people believed that the Hebrews owed their uniqueness to the fact that they were the chosen people of God, and that He had separated them from the rest of the world and had given to them what he denied others. This could no more be done than a flower could bloom "solitary in some divine or magic garden, without striking roots in the common earth, without breathing the common air, without expanding in the common sunshine".[2] Nations never lived in water-tight compartments, in complete isolation.

1. [illegible], "Journal of Religion", Vol. [illegible], p. [illegible].
2. [illegible], in the Preface to [illegible] "A History of [illegible] Religion", p. 2.

from one another; and least of all did the Hebrew nation, because it was situated on the great highroad between East and West. Even though the Hebrews had wanted to remain aloof from the world they could not have done so with the daily caravans and armies continually passing through their very midst. "Instead of developing their unique characteristics because of isolation from the world, it was rather because of contact with it".[1] Because of such intimate contact with the world and because they borrowed so largely from others, thus adding the attainments of others to their own, they far outdistanced their contemporaries in their cultural developments.

The name Hebrew, deriving from Habiru originally had no ethnic connotation, but meant simply "robber, nomad". References to the Habiru have been found in texts of the Larsa dynasty toward the end of the third millennium, in the Boghazkoi texts, in the Amarna letters, and most recently of all in the tablets discovered by Dr. Chiera near Kirkuk. Hence the Hebrews were of many and widely distributed. By their own testimony, they were of composite origin. According to Deuteronomy 26:5 the original stock was Aramean. It is apparent that in their migration into Palestine they seem to have amalgamated to some extent with various "Hittite" groups. In Palestine they gradually absorbed the native Canaanite-Amorite population. It is with some reason that Ezekiel (16:3) could say of Jerusalem: "Your origin and your birth are of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother

1. [illegible], "Journal of Religion", Vol. [illegible], p. [illegible].

[illegible]. [illegible] between [illegible] and Arabia (Ezek. 27:1[illegible]). The [illegible] in [illegible], [illegible] in the Edomitic dialect. [illegible] as the [illegible] of wisdom.

Psalm 104 presents close parallels with the Hymn of Amenophis IV in praise of Aton, and Proverbs 22:17-23:[illegible] is a translation of [illegible] of Amen-em-ope.

Dr. Pfeiffer says, "[illegible] books [illegible] with the writings of Amenophis and Amen-em-ope. However, the fact that the Edomites [illegible] in wisdom before the Israelites [illegible] their way into the Old Testament, [illegible] the Egyptian material [illegible] through Edomitic [illegible] before reaching the Israelites". (Page 1[illegible])[1].

If we compare the foreign sections of Proverbs (22:17-23:34; 30:1-31:9) with the rest of the book we find [illegible] the Edomitic sections [illegible], in vocabulary and ideas, the influence of the religion of Israel. "The doctrine of earthly retribution, which pervades the rest of Proverbs, is not only disregarded in the Edomitic sections but is actually [illegible], as in Job, to be [illegible] (30:[illegible]). The [illegible] of [illegible] the Edomites which are [illegible] by [illegible], Job, [illegible], and Lemuel, [illegible] Egyptian [illegible], are so [illegible] from the literature of Israel [illegible], with Pfeiffer ([illegible], p. [illegible]), that the [illegible] books of the Old Testament [illegible] probably [illegible]

[1] Edomitic Wisdom, ZATW.

[illegible])".[1]

The Book of Job shows its Edomitic character in the geographical and natural background of the book, upon which it is based, and upon the philosophical conceptions of the author. Thus, in The Book of Job, p. 7 says: "The story of Job's undeserved suffering is "(laid) upon the Edomitic background". There is only one geographical reference to Palestine in the Book of Job, and it is found in a passage of disputed authenticity (40:23). The author seems to have first hand knowledge of Egypt and Sinai. Ethiopia (28:19) and Arabia (1:15, 6:19, and 22:24, 22:16) are alluded to. All the other localities mentioned in Job are to be located in Edom. Teman, the home of Eliphaz, is unquestionably Edomitic. The home of Bildad (Shuah) is likewise in Edom (Gen. 25:2). Undoubtedly the neighbors of Job and Elihu were located in Edom.

With the exception of the [illegible] in the speeches of Elihu (whose speeches are [illegible] to be the additions of editors), the names of the dramatic personae of Job are Edomitic. The [illegible] names which are typically Israelitish, [illegible] El (55 times), Eloah (41 times), and Shaddai (31 times).

It is interesting to note that the flora of the book of Job is not that of Palestine: the olive, the fig, and the vine were not extensively cultivated in the land of the author, trees were rare. With the exception of a few fields of wheat, barley, and corn, the rest of the country consisted of steppes with nothing but thorns; the [illegible] to escape [illegible] ni[illegible] of Egypt; the inhospitable desert [illegible]

[1] Edomitic Wisdom, p. 18.

the dwellings of men.

The fauna of this country were sheep, oxen, asses, camels, horses, and dogs. The wild fauna is that of the desert land and South of the Dead Sea: of the mammals, wild asses, wild goats, hinds, and lions are mentioned; of the birds, the eagle, the hawk, the stork, the ostrich, the raven, the [illegible], and the falcon (birds living in sparsely populated districts) are mentioned; the dove, so often referred to in the literature of the Israelites, seems to be unknown; of the reptiles, adders and vipers are known; of the lower animals, worms, spiders, locusts, and moths. "In general, the flora and fauna of Job are in striking contrast with those of the Song of Solomon; in Job forbidding and cheerless wilderness, with [illegible] beasts and desperate men; in the Song of Songs fertile fields and vineyards, the fragrance of the rose and the beauty of the lily, the [illegible] of the [illegible] and the voice of the turtle. The pessimism of Edom, is, in a measure, the result of the depressing natural environment".'

The philosophy of the Book of Job is of Edomitic character as is proved by the parallels in thought and expression with the Edomitic fragments found in Psalms and Proverbs.

The wisdom literature of the Edomitic sages, preserved by the Jews, was pessimistic and agnostic; their ethics in some respects akin to Stoicism.

Quoting from Dr. Pfeiffer's article, page 22, "Man's [illegible] lot is toil and sorrow, at its best tragedy, at its worst agony, without hope for happiness in life or death. There is no reward for noble deeds, nor punishment for evil ones, on earth or in Sheol. Man is not the lord of creation, as in

'Pfeiffer, Edomitic Wisdom.

hardly any better than the beasts whom God endows with life and provides with sustenance; indeed, some animals surpass man in strength and wisdom; all living beings must die, and none returns from the House of the Dead".

"Religion offers no relief to human misery, because God does not concern himself with human affairs, and is unknown to mortals. The desperate question of Heman: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?" receives no reply; to Job's appeals the Lord answered out of the whirlwind with a series of sarcastic questions: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?' The wise man must admit, with Agur, 'I have not learned wisdom, that I should have the knowledge of the Holy One". For 'Wisdom is not found in the land of the living' (Job 28:13. Cf. Eccl. 7:23ff.), the works of God are "past finding out" (9:10). His purposes are unsearchable (11:7-9). That God revealed His will and nature to mortal men, was unbelievable to the thinkers of Edom"[1]. ....

It is difficult to determine the date of composition and of the circulation among the Israelites of this Edomitic wisdom literature; it seems probable that these books were known in Israel shortly before the exile. "Before the introduction of Edomitic wisdom literature, the Israelites showed no interest in cosmology; Jahweh reveals himself and his will to the Israelites not through the stars, but through his servants, the prophets" ([illegible], "[illegible]", p. 164).

Intellectually, the wisdom of Edom was an achievement that still wins our admiration, [illegible]

[1] Pfeiffer, Edomitic Wisdom.

[illegible] for a God of mercy and justice, it [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]-[illegible].

Chapter II.

HEBREW WISDOM LITERATURE

CHAPTER II

HEBREW WISDOM LITERATURE.

I. Introduction.

John Franklin Genung in the preface, page fifteen, of his book, "The Hebrew Literature of Wisdom", says that "the Hebrew Wisdom, growing as a unitary strain, an organic and as it were dramatic sequence, to rounded finish and culmination in the fulness of the time, is regarded as an integral (strand) of scripture revelation, coordinate with the strands of law and prophecy, yet complete in itself, in the single yet compositely twined idea for which the Bible ultimately stands".

In the Old Testament three books have been given the collective name of the Wisdom books, or the Wisdom literature. These are: the Book of Job, the Book of Proverbs, and the Book of Ecclesiastes. They are representative writings of a class of men of whom otherwise little is known; less, perhaps, than is known of any other class of writers or leaders. Quoting from Genung, page five, "Whether, like scribes and rabbis, the wise men or Sages constituted a distinct order, recognized and honored as such; whether a kind of official authority was accorded to them in the make-up of the national life; whether they formed a quasi-university fellowship, wherein they passed examinations and took degrees; whether their profession of Wisdom was also a lifelihood, in which like a modern lawyer they gave counsel and took fees - are matters concerning which we can do no more than infer or conjecture". But that they had a distinctive standing in the nation, that in their sphere they were an acknowledged influence in

society, [illegible] indicated in the clearest reference that we have to them, a verse in Jeremiah. "Then said they" - namely, certain perverse people whom the prophet's words had irritated, - "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet." Here the wise [illegible] as a kind of order, coordinate with that of priests and prophets, and having their function [illegible] in its way [illegible] by the side of the priests' law and the prophets' burden. They were, it appears, counsellors, advisers, [illegible] whom the people resorted for a kind of guidance not provided for in the Mosaic ordinances which the priests had in charge, nor in the impassioned appeals addressed to the nation at large by the prophets. A third order of leadership was in fact needed.

"It would seem that these sages gave their counsel mostly by word of mouth, and not from some central bureau or university. They mingled among the people and were thus in close touch with practical life. They were honored for their work's sake, rather than for the fame they set, or the office they held. When they wrote, they wrote anonymously, or else, hid their individuality under the name and prestige of King Solomon. Their writings were not chanted in the Temple, nor read officially in the synagogues. Homely maxims as these were, a humbler but more potent and pervasive mission was their; to circulate among those common work-day folk whose thoughts centre in concrete tasks and trials,..... The literature of Wisdom, whether oral or written, was a literature immediate, practical, portable".[1] It was the [illegible] department of [illegible]

1. Gesung, "The Hebrew Literature of Wisdom", pp. 7-8.

literature, among the Hebrews, which did not insist on its divine origin and function; we might call it the secular department of the Bible. Although, at that time, the lines of sacred and secular were not sharply or even consciously drawn, because the whole life of the people had still a background of the sacred. Nevertheless, this literature was read with a feeling of freedom, not: "Thus saith the Lord", but "Thus saith a strong, wise, much-observing, much-experienced, much sympathizing man". In its type it is [illegible], [illegible], and also flexible and limpid. In its classic, and, so to say, chiselled purity, the Hebrew form may best be seen, perhaps, in the section of the Book of Proverbs extending from the tenth to the middle of the twenty-second chapter; and headed specifically The Proverbs of Solomon; which section is probably the oldest body of Hebrew proverbial [illegible] to us. We find in these two-line epigrams the thoughts of the common people cast in artistic style. Genung says, "The distinguishing [illegible] is their [illegible] influence of a three-fold ideal: fact, truth, [illegible]. [illegible] of fact that [illegible] observation and verification, in a word, science, and the scientific temper. [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] that [illegible] is in [illegible] with nature and life, [illegible]. And [illegible] in the literary touch and finish; [illegible], [illegible], [illegible] quality".[1]

Although the Hebrew [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible], [illegible]

1. Genung, "The Hebrew Literature of Wisdom", p. [illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible] en the [illegible] The Egyptian Wise Men [illegible] and into the common things of life. [illegible] as a vital element of [illegible]".[1]

1. [illegible], "Hebrew Literature of Wisdom", p. 31.

II. In The Old Testament.

1. Job.

Of all the wisdom books, Job is by far the greatest both in religious depth and in literary power. It deals with the most universal of all topics, the Mystery of Suffering. Many praiseworthy expressions have been written about it. For instance, Sellin has called it "a tremendous work, the finest flower of the Hebrew literature"; Moore says that it "is in many respects, one of the most remarkable productions of any age or country. It is, without doubt, in its general plan, as well as in the rhythmical construction and high poetic character of its language a work of art. Deep thought and long continued study must have been united with genius in its production".[1]

The problem of the book stated in a few words is: Why do the righteous suffer? or at greater length: How can the suffering of a righteous man be reconciled with the existence of a righteous God?

The book opens with an historical prologue in prose, which is really the adoption, by our author, of an old folk tale. This is told in chapters one and two. From chapter III to XLII:7 we have what might be called controversy in verse. We first have the speech of Job, in which he curses his birthday. This is succeeded by the colloquies between Job and his three friends, chapters III to XXXI. In the first series of controversy is included the speech of Eliphaz (Ch. IV-V) with Job's answer (Ch. VI-VII; the speech of Bildad (Ch. VIII)

1. Moore, "Translation of the Book of Job", Introd. p. IX.

and Job's answer (Ch. IX-X); the speech of Zophar (Ch. XI) and Job's answer (Ch. XII-XIV). In the second series of controversy (Ch. XV-XXI) we have the same friends speaking in the same order as in the first cycle of [illegible], Job answering after each of the three men speak. In the third series of controversy (Ch. XXII-XXXI), Eliphaz speaks (Ch. XXII) followed by Job's answers (Ch. XXIII-XXIV); Bildad speaks (Ch. XXV) Job answers (Ch. XXVI-XXXI). Zophar does not speak this time. But we do have the discourses of Elihu (Ch. XXXII-XXXVII). Jehovah's reply to Job is in chapters XXXVIII-XLII:6. From here (XLII:7) to the end (XLII:17) we have the epilogue in prose.

Chapter XXVIII is a monologue on Wisdom, which contributed nothing to the solution of the problem with which the book is concerned. The main idea of the poem (XXVIII:20-27) is that Wisdom is unattainable by man and known to God alone. In XVIII:28 Wisdom is concluded as a piety expressing itself in morality, or as a morality rooted in religion, which is the dominant ideal of the Old Testament.

2. Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher.

This is short book of Twelve chapters with no chapter containing more than twenty-nine verses and the half of them containing less than twenty verses. Sometimes it is called the Book of Koheleth, which name is the Hebrew original of the Greek name, Ecclesiastes, and of the English term The Preacher. Koheleth is best taken to mean "the convener of an assembly", and this "convener" seems to be none other than Solomon. It is also clear that Solomon is the king whose varied experiences of wisdom and luxury are referred to in chapters one and two.

Until critical investigation took place the book was almost universally ascribed to Solomon. Some writers still hold this view, but eminent critics do not agree with the old view.

"Martin Luther was the first to perceive that Solomon cannot have been the author of Ecclesiastes. He says in his "Table Talk": 'Solomon himself did not write the book of Ecclesiastes, but it was produced by Sirach at the time of he Maccabees.... It is sort of Talmud, compiled from many books, probably from the library of King Ptolemy Euergetes of Egypt'".[1]

In order to reach the solution of his problem the author of Job uses the literary vehicle of a debate. Here the writer has chosen an autobiographical sketch of Solomon as his literary vehicle, because Solomon was the typical representative of Wisdom, and was also a king whose magnificence has passed into a proverb.

Koheleth is a Jewish man of culture influenced somewhat by the Greek view of life. As an author his characteristics are in the main Hebraic, though one can detect the Greek philosophic spirit in his writing. His work is without a model, but the dramatic element in it reminds us somewhat of the Book of Job even though it

is far from reaching the literary perfection of Job or of the proverbial collections.

Hugo de Groot, the father of international law, better known as Grotius, regarded Ecclesiastes as a collection of opinions of different ages, originally spoken to different peoples.

The first eleven verses of chapter I are an introduction or preface in which Koheleth sets forth his conviction that everything is vain. Then repeatedly throughout the book he expresses his philosophy of life saying that there is nothing better to do than to eat and drink; to get the most enjoyment out of life, for it is limited at its best. His dark outlook upon life has forced him to pessimism. However, his concluding advice, in accordance with the Semitic philosophy, is manly and healthy, if not inspiring. He urges the young man to make the most of his youth, to enter into life heartily. While his philosophy of life is, in a sense hopeless, it is not immoral. He does not advise debauchery or sensuality; he shows that there is no permanent enjoyment in these. He is a sceptic, but he has not abandoned his belief in God. The sum of Qoheleth's teaching is that even though labor is vain, man should work and enjoy to the full life's round of duties and opportunities, while he bravely faces the real facts of life.

Wright, Schechter, and McNeile have proved that the book of Ecclesiastes was known to Ben Sira and influenced him to such a degree that the book of Ecclesiasticus clearly betrays its dependence upon Qoheleth's work. Nöldeke and McNeile agree that Ben Sira used Qoheleth in its completed form, and this is clearly proved by the

(1. Barton, Ecclesiastes in International Critical Commentary, p.54.

evidence.

According to Barton[1] "the proof of the priority of Qoheleth is of three kinds: (1) Passages extant in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus, which show dependence upon the Hebrew of Qoheleth, (2) Passages not yet recovered in the Hebrew, but the Greek of which is clearly a translation of Hebrew, practically identical with that of Qoheleth, and (3) Passages in which Ben Sira has paraphrased the thought of Qoheleth, though clearly dependent upon it".

Examples of the third proof are as follows:

Qoh. 1:4: "Generation comes and generation goes,
But the world forever stands".

Cf. B. S. 14:18 (Heb.):
"As leaves grow upon a green tree,
Of which one withers and another springs up,
So the generations of flesh and blood,
One perishes and another ripens".

Qoh. 3:7: "A time to keep silence
And a time to speak".

Cf. BS. 20:5-6 (Heb.):
"There is one who is silent for want of an answer,
And there is one who is silent because he sees the time".
"A wise man is silent until the time,
But a fool does not observe the time".

Qoh. 4:8b: "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?"

Cf. BS. 14:4 (Heb.):
"He who deprives his soul gathers for another,
And in his goods a stranger shall revel".

1. The International Critical Commentary, p. 54.

Qoh. 7:8b: "Better is patience than pride".

Cf. BS. 5:11b (Heb.): "In patience of spirit return answer".

For the most part it will be noted how Ben Sira enlarges upon the thought of Qoheleth. This fact was mentioned in the discussion of the book of Ben Sira.

Wright and McNeile have clearly proved, the author of the Book of Wisdom, like Ben Sira, knew the work of Qoheleth, but did not approve of it, while Ben Sira regarded its teachings with favor. The parallelism is as follows:

Wisdom

2:5. For our life is the passing of a shadow, and there is no retreating of our end, because it is sealed and none turneth it back.

2:6. Come then let us enjoy the good things that exist, and let us use the created things eagerly as in youth.

2:7. Let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments, and let no flowers of spring pass us by.

Qoheleth.

6:12. The number of the days of his vain life, for he spends them like a shadow.

8:8. Nor is he ruler in the day of death.

2:24. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and enjoy himself.

9:7. Drink wine with a glad heart.

3. Proverbs.

The Book of Proverbs does not make any claim to any system or unity, but it is merely a collection, or rather several collections, of wise pronouncements on life, in [illegible] form. There seems to be an opinion for most any occasion. It is commonly thought that the oldest portion of the Book of Proverbs begins with the tenth chapter. At the head of this chapter is the title: "The Proverbs of Solomon"; and in the old King James Version, which undertakes to give the contents of all the chapters of Scripture, is put here the note: "From this chapter to the five and twentieth are sundry observations of morall vertues, and their contrary vices". To be accurate, these "sundry observations" extend to the sixteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter: three hundred seventy-five proverbs in all, clearly marked off by their form from the rest of the book. They are all couplet-proverbs, antithetic or parallelistic, exhibiting thus the mashal or aphorism in its most condensed and, so to say, classic [illegible]. In the beginning of the sixteenth chapter there is a great predominance of antithesis consisting of the great [illegible] contrasts of good and evil, wisdom and folly. Then from that point on, there is an equally great predominance of proverbs wherein the second line enlarges upon the idea of the first, by way of repetition or elucidation or consequence. The order into which the mashals of the same fall was on the whole the natural order of an investigation, the steps of which are as follows:

"1. Discrimination; and this leads here to the initial predominance of the antithetic mashal.

2 Parallelism, or putting a thing in interpretative terms; which leads to a next step, the synonymous or antithetic mashal.

3. Analogy, or tracing what the thing is like; which, as refining stage, leads to the simile mashal.

4. Comparison, as literal thought what simile is to figurative; which leads to the comparative, or "better than" style of mashal."[1]

Another collection of proverbs begins with the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second chapter. We know this because a different form of mashal begins to prevail here. Instead of the pithy, condensed couplet we have stanzas of from two to sometimes six lines, with a couplet only here and there interspersed. Besides this, the collection is introduced by a preface of its own, in which is intimated that not Solomon, but the guild of sages are the authors of what succeeds.

The collection of proverbs which extends to the twenty-second verse of the twenty-fourth chapter is a graceful and quite complete little manual of conduct. It concerns itself about what may be called the secondary duties of life and manners, duties relating to surety-ship, gluttony, sensuality, intemperance, [illegible], and the like.

After this section we have another group of mashals, a kind of postscript, headed by the words: "These also are sayings of the wise". (Prov. 24:23). In this postscript, which fills out the twenty-fourth chapter, we find the poem entitled Field of the Slothful, containing the refrain used earlier in

1. Genung, "Hebrew Literature of Wisdom", p. 101.

in 38:24-39:11; here the passage, on task of the Scribe).

"The wisdom of the scribe increaseth wisdom,

And he that hath little business can become wise."

Then Ben-Sira proceeds to emphasize upon these words by giving a number of illustrations showing that those who are occupied with ordinary trades and professions cannot possibly find the requisite leisure which is to be possessed by those who would acquire wisdom (38:25-38); and the essay concludes with an eloquent description of the ideal scribe (Sofer chakam), thus revealing the positive side of his thesis.

Ben-Sira exhibits no great degree of originality, but there is plenty of individuality in his work as is illustrated by his expression of the proper [illegible], and also by the use he makes of the Old Testament scriptures. Not only does he rarely quote from the Old Testament, but he utilizes the word and teaching of the inspired writers as the authority for what he has to say, and then sets forth his own ideas upon a given subject.

The Book of Sirach contains a large collection of moral maxims and wise counsels regarding almost every conceivable emergency in life. These maxims and counsels are applicable to people in every condition of life; a large proportion of them deals with the ordinary, every-day relationships between man and man, whether in regard to the rich or the poor, the oppressed, the mourners, etc.; rules of courtesy, behaviour at table, politeness, respect for one's betters, and many other similar topics can be found. Ben-Sira's intimate knowledge of human nature meets one at every turn, and is certainly one of the most instructive features of the book. It was almost

Ben-Sira's object, in writing his book, is [illegible] Jewish life of his day an authoritative work to which reference could be had for guidance and instruction in every circumstance of life.

We are especially interested in Sirach's teaching on Wisdom. In 24:3-5 he graphically brings out the divine character of Wisdom.

"I came forth from the mouth of the most High (cf. 1:1),
And as a mist I covered the earth;
In the high places did I fix my abode,
And my throne was in the pillar of cloud.
Alone I compassed the circuit of heaven,
And in the depth of the abyss I walked".

In Sirach 1:4 Wisdom took her part in the creation of the world:

"Before them all (i.e. the heaven and the earth) was
wisdom created".

In 1:9 Ben-Sira evidently conceived of Wisdom having been created in preparation for the work of creation which was to come:

"He himself created her, and saw, and numbered her;
And poured her out upon all his works...."

We find a more definite statement of the existence of Wisdom before the creation of the world in 24:9a:

"He created me from the beginning, before the world".

This vivid personification of Wisdom is based on Proverbs 8, where the same thought finds expression in 8:22-23:

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,

On over the earth was".

(See the entire passage: Proverbs 8:28-31).

Because of the intimate relationship between Wisdom and the Almighty, the eternity of Wisdom is naturally involved. In the opening words of our book we sense this eternity of Wisdom:

"All Wisdom cometh from the Lord,

And is with Him for ever".

The same is implied in 24:9[illegible]:

"The memorial of me shall never cease".

The personification of Wisdom is illustrated in another way when it is said that she takes up her abode among men, and invites them to come and dwell with her:

"With faithful men is she, and she hath been established from eternity,

And with their seed shall she continue (1:1[illegible]).

Come unto me, ye that desire me,

And be ye filled with my produce;

For my memorial is sweeter than honey,

And the possession of me than the honey-comb (24:19-20)".

Ben-Sira was desirous to show the superiority of the wisdom of Israel over that of the Greeks, so he represents Wisdom as having sought a resting-place among the nations of the world, but Israel alone was worthy of her, and that among them, therefore, God bids her abide; our passage 24:7-12 reads as follows:

"With all these (i.e. every people and nation) I sought a resting-place,

And (said): In whose inheritance shall I [illegible]

Then the Creator of all things gave me commandment,

And He that created me fixed my dwelling-place (for me);

And He said: Let thy dwelling-place be in Jacob,

And in Israel take up thine inheritance.....

And I took root among an honoured people,

In the portion of the Lord (and) of His inheritance".

In Proverbs 8:31ff. the thought of Wisdom dwelling among men is already taught, but Ben-Sira elaborates it, (as is characteristic of his individuality), and in such a passage as that just quoted treats it with great poetical beauty.

Dr. Oesterley in the Introduction to the Book of Sirach, page 39 says: "It is characteristic, not only of the Wisdom of Ben-Sira, but also of the Wisdom-Literature generally, that the term Wisdom is never used in the sense of pure knowledge; in its essence it connoted originally the faculty of distinguishing between what is good and what is bad, or perhaps more accurately (in so far as earlier times are concerned), between what is advantageous and what is harmful. But in any case, regarding the nature of Wisdom, it is true to say that in the Jewish conception it had primarily a religious content from the beginning; that is to say, that it was in its origin essentially a divine attribute, the possession of which made man in some measure like God. In comparatively early times it must have come to this, that to be able to differentiate between good and evil, i.e. the exercise of the moral consciousness, enabled men to stand in a closer relationship to God than mere external observances, however assiduously practised, of a ceremonial law; this, at any rate, would have been the outcome of the teaching of the prophets. It is in following their

teaching that Ben-Sira inculcates the truth that the way to lead a wise life is to live according to divine commandments; in contemplating the wisdom of God, as set forth in the commandments of God, and acting accordingly, man makes his own wisdom approximate to the divine, and morally, practical wisdom, in its many and various forms, is thus of the same kind, only less in degree, as divine wisdom. It is thus easy to see, one may remark in passing, that the identification be between the Law and Wisdom, referred to in the previous section, was inevitable".[1]

Ben-Sira emphasized the religious nature of Wisdom. When he described its origin, namely, that it was an emanation from the Deity. This truth is further emphasized by the dictum, common to all the books of the Wisdom-Literature, in one form or another, that:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom (1:14)".

Though Ben-Sira takes this thought from the earlier sense, he nevertheless makes it thoroughly his own, and elaborates it in such sayings as:

"The crown of Wisdom is the fear of the Lord (1:18);"

"To fear the Lord is the root of Wisdom (1: 20)."

According to Ben-Sira Wisdom also has a less exalted, but extremely useful element in its nature in that it comprises knowledge of the world. This does not imply a non-religious element in Wisdom. Since Ben-Sira has only the vaguest ideas about a life hereafter, he is mainly concerned with the affairs of this life. Therefore, he devotes the most attention in his book to this element in the nature of Wisdom. So he says of Wisdom, that:

'Charles, R.H., The Apocrypha.

"They that love her love life (4: 12);"

"The Wisdom of the poor man lifteth up his head and causeth him to sit among princes (11: 1)."

If one possessed Wisdom, Ben-Sira insists on its being exhibited among men:

"Hidden wisdom and concealed treasure,
What profit is there in either?
Better is the man that hideth his folly
Than a man that hideth his wisdom (20: 30,31)."

To those who are desirous of acquiring Wisdom, Ben-Sira gives the following instruction:

"If thou desire Wisdom, keep the commandments,
And the Lord will give her freely unto thee.
(1: 26)"

Although Wisdom is a free gift of God, yet there is need of sacrifice and discipline to obtain it:

"But I will walk with him in disguise,
And at first--I will try him with temptations.
Fear and dread will I bring upon him,
And I will torment him with chastisement.
(4:17)."

However, if the acquisition of Wisdom requires earnest and sustained effort, it offers great reward:

"For at length thou wilt find her rest,
And she will be turned for thee into gladness.
And her fetters shall become a stay of strength
for thee,
And her bonds for robes of glory.
An ornament of gold is her yoke,
And her fetters a cord of blue.
Thou shalt array thee with her (as with) robes
of glory,

And crown thee with her (as with) a crown of Beauty
(6:[illegible]-31)."

The power of Wisdom is so lasting among those who truly possess it; that the possession is regarded as hereditary:

"If he trust me, he shall possess me,

And his posterity shall hold me fast
(4:16, see also 1:15)."

The possessor of Wisdom may lose it by sinning:

"If he turn away (from me), I will forsake him,

And will deliver him over to the spoilers (4:19)."

The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, sometimes called the "Church Book," was originally written in Hebrew. For a longtime the Hebrew original was lost; it has been only between thirty and forty years since it was discovered. We get our English version at second hand, from a translation made into Greek by his grandson, and dated in the light and thirtieth year of King Ptolemy Euergetes, that is, one hundred and thirty-two years before Christ. His grandfather's Hebrew original, then, comes perhaps from the first quarter of that century, and so not many years after the writing of Ecclesiastes. It is said to be the longest scripture book (fifty-one chapters) written by one author.

Passages and inspirations have found their way into literature and music. George Eliot must have been acquainted with the book, for we recall how in Adam Bede's Sunday morning reading "the son of Sirach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile." John Bunyan's stormy religious nature once received great comfort, without knowing the source, from the verse: "Look at the generations of old and see; did any ever trust in the Lord and was confounded?" Bernard of Clairvaux, it is said, caught from Ecclesiasticus a certain inwardness of meditative spirit and applied it to a Christian theme,

in the Latin hymn, "Jesu dulcis memoria", translated into the familiar hymns, "Jesus, the very thought is sweet", and "Jesus, the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills the breast". It is said that the German choral, "Nun danket alle Gott", "Now thank we all our God; with heart, and hands, and voices", was taken from some portions of this book. The composer Brahms, in his composition, the "Four serious songs for bass", set the third song to those piercing words of Ecclesiasticus":

"Oh Death,
How bitter art thou
Unto him that dwelleth in peace,
To him that hath joy in his possessions,
And liveth free from trouble;
To him whose ways are prosperous in all things,
To him that still may eat".

"Oh Death,
How welcome thy call,
To him that is in want, and whose strength doth fail him,
And whose life is but a pain,
Who hath nothing to hope for,
And cannot look for relief".(Ecclesiasticus 41:1-2)

Even though the book is classed among "the hidden books," the above examples will show that it has been sought out by many meditative and appreciative souls; it is a much loved book.

2. The Wisdom of Solomon.

Samuel Holmes has said, "The Book of Wisdom has long enjoyed the reputation of being the most attractive and interesting book in the Apocrypha".[1] He thinks his statement might hold true if the thought and expression of only the first ten or eleven chapters are considered. The writer seems to be one of a strongly religious spirit, who has felt the stress and perplexity of life and suffering, yet retains his belief in a God of righteousness.

This book falls naturally into three sections: (1) chapters 1 to 6:8; (2) chapters 6:9 to 11:1; (3) chapters 11:2 to 19. The first section has been called, "the book of eschatology"; it portrays in vivid contrast the different destinies which await the righteous and the ungodly who oppress them. One of the religious teachings, the denial that suffering presupposes sins, reminds one of the Book of Job.

The second section consists of the panegyric on Wisdom which gives its name to the book.

The third section is a midrash in glorification of the Jews. In it we have an historical retrospect of Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness, broken by a dissertation on the origin and evils of idolatry in chapters 13-15.

It is only the first two sections that belong in our discussion:

The authorship of the book is unknown; it is perhaps the work of more than one writer, and probably dates from after 50 B.C.

1. Charles, R.H. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, p. 518.

In the first ten chapters of Wisdom the author conceives God to be so remote that He performs His will by means of an intermediary whom He sends forth into the world (9:10). This intermediary is Wisdom, and possesses all the attributes of Deity - omnipotence (7:27), omniscience (8:8 and 9:11), and she puts these attributes into action. She administers all things well (8:1). At the creation Wisdom stood by God and chose His works; the subsequent administration was committed to her, since her relationship to God at the creation ensured to her complete knowledge of His commands (9:9). If God knows all things, it is because Wisdom takes her reports to Him (1:9-10).

When Solomon's wisdom is estimated, it already seems to have established cults to compare with: it "excelled the wisdom of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt", according to I Kings 4:30. The guild of sages was a kind of international institution; one might call it a literary court or clearing-house, in which all thinkers, of whatever religion or nation, could meet on common ground. Solomon contributed his share to the special character of it. Even Ruskin in his "Unto this Last", Essay III, catches the essentially commercial spirit of the early Wisdom utterance. "Some centuries", he says, "before the Christian era, a Jew merchant, largely engaged in business on the Gold Coast and reported to have made one of the largest fortunes of his time (held also in repute for much practical sagacity) left among his ledgers some general maxims concerning wealth, which have been preserved, strangely enough, even to our own days". Since Solomon was the first Hebrew trader and importer, it was quite natural that some of his sayings should reflect this

business spirit. But its strength, sanity, and character did not depend upon this source alone. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has the following in regard to the Book of Wisdom or the Wisdom of Solomon: it is "the most brilliant production of pre-Christian Hebrew philosophical thought, remarkable both for the elevation of its ideas and for the splendour of its diction".[1]

1. Vol. 28, p. 750.

IV. Character of Hebrew Wisdom Literature.

1. Conclusions drawn from Wisdom Books.

All of the Hebrew wisdom literature books seem to be imbued with a deep religious nature. In the Old Testament, Job has probably the greatest religious depth, as well as the best literary power. From it we learn about the mystery of suffering, the most iniversal of all subjects. This is a problem that is common to all races and creeds, as well as to the rich and poor alike. The humanness of the book appeals to us, so applicable to everyday life. How natural for one who is beset with woes to complain! Nothing more than human nature asserting itself. It is wisdom literature dramatized.

The Proverbs are quite practical in their suggestions for conduct and the duties of life.

Ecclesiastes gives very good advice, it is a really deep book, even almost philosophical. In fact, a philosophical observation of life is the basis of all wisdom literature.

Sirach is a truly Israelitish production, the largest and most comprehensive in the wisdom literature. It could not have maintained itself as Sirach has done if it were a mere imitation. It is a partial reflection of the life of the times. In it we find advice for almost every conceivable emergency in life, applicable to all conditions of people. However, we do not find any trace of really philosophical thought in it. The author emphasizes his deep regard for the beauties of nature.

The Wisdom of Solomon was gathered from other times and other lands beside his own! It is brought, as we have seen, into contrast and companison with that of the great sages of his day. It is of the very nature of proverbial philosophy to belong rather to mankind

than to any particular time or people.

"Job is a passionate discussion of the question whether the divine government of the world is just; Proverbs and Ben-Sira ignore this question, and confine themselves to cheery practical suggestions for the conduct of every-day life; Ecclesiastes treats life as a logically and ethically insoluble riddle, and advises a moderate and wise enjoyment of its good things; the Wisdom of Solomon dwells on eternal wisdom, the architect and inspirer of the world, as the guide of life, and on the hope of happy immortality as the consolation amid earthly trials. Proverbs and Ben-Sira thus form a separate sub group, devoting themselves to practical morals in contrast with the speculative element in the other books".[1]

"The essential character of Hebrew philosophy is far more practical than speculative; it is as little inclined to pursue or to prompt genuine speculation, as it is to identify itself with secular philosophy in general, and with unaided human reason to investigate the final cause of things. It is essentially a divine philosophy, planting its feet upon the basis of the divine revelation, and staying itself upon the eternal principles of the divine law, and it is this determinate and positive character of its method of conceiving and teaching, that chiefly distinguishes it from the philosophy of other nations and of other times".[2]

1.Toy, The Book of Proverbs, (Int. Crit. Com.), p. 19.

2. Lange, Commentary on Proverbs. Introd. p. 5.

Chapter III.

EGYPTIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

CHAPTER III

EGYPTIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

I. Introduction.

Back in the sophomore year of my high school days when I studied ancient history well do I remember that Egypt was the country with which we began our study. Later on, in the senior year of my college days, when I studied the History of Art, which included, that year, painting and sculpture, again it was Egypt with which we began the study of the beginnings of our subject. Because of her great influence upon the ancient world Egypt has deservedly been called the "Mother of History and the Mother of Civilization". She is, indeed, an interesting country and has challenged such men, as Professor James Breasted and Dr. Wallis Budge to make a thorough study of her history.

Recent discoveries due to excavations by interested and untiring research parties have given a freshness and a newness to Egypt that has never been known before. We are no longer thinking in terms of the musty tombs of the museums, but in terms of making the dead past a part of the living present.

"While the proverbial lore of Arabia brings us close to the running fountain of Semitic wisdom, the Egyptian sages had at a far earlier date evolved a gnomic literature, in the shape of books of moral precept or instruction (sebayet), full of sound sense, and sometimes even high moral excellence. The earliest of these books, the Wisdom of Imhotep, chief architect of Zoser, founder of the Third Dynasty, is known to us only from allusions in later literature; but two products of the Third and Fifth Dynasties, the Wisdom of Kagemni and

the Wisdom of Ptah-hotep, not only enjoyed wide popularity in their own day, but have been preserved in MSS of the Middle Kingdom. The former is a simple treatise on deportment; the latter covers a much wider range, offering 'series of beautiful speech' (as the author himself phrases it) on such subjects as diligence, courtesy, faithfulness to trusts, humility, self-restraint, purity, loyalty to friends, love of wife and family, kindness to dependents. Of similar tenor, though graver in content, and fresher and more artistic in expression, are the later maxims of Ani (from the Twenty-first Dynasty), urging not merely the moral virtues of purity, temperance, modesty of speech, a cautious demeanor alike at home, in the street, and in social fellowship, kindness, consideration for the poor and aged, reverence towards parents, but also the strictly religious obligations of chaste and regular worship, prayer, praise, and sacrifice".[1]

"Couched in a more cynical vein is the Wisdom of Amenemhet I, founder of the Twelfth Dynasty, written shortly before his death (c. 1970 B.C.). Embittered by the rebellion of his subjects, he warns his son Senusret against [illegible] confidence in those around him. The only influence that could appeal to men is terror; [illegible] all subordinates; [illegible] friends nor intimates, 'wherein there is no end', and guard himself well as to others, "for a man has no people in the day of evil". Somewhat similar is the lament of Khekheperre - sonbe, priest of Heliopolis under Senusret II, (1906-1887 B.C.), who in a pessimistic picture of the conditions of the time, [illegible]

1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, page 482.

Misanthrope with his Soul, ending in a wistful longing for death as the only release from evil, and the admonitions of Ipuwer, the gloom of which, however, is relieved at the end by the vision of a righteous ruler, with no evil in his heart; who goes about like a 'shepherd', gathering together his scattered and 'feverad' herds. On a different key are the Precepts of Duauf, urging his son Pepi to diligence in learning, as the most 'beautiful' and honorable of callings, and the remarkable Song of the Harper, which finds the only consolation against the vanity and transcience of life in the frank pursuit of pleasure".[1]

"Give comfort to thy heart,
And let the heart forget these things;
What is best for thee to do is
To follow thy heart's desire as long as thou livest.
Anoint thy head with scented unguents,
Let thine apparel be of byssus.
Dipped in costly (perfumes),
In the veritable products (?) of the gods.
.....
Enjoy thyself more than thou hast ever done before,
And let not thy heart pine for lack of pleasure.
.....
Pursue thy heart's desire and thine own happiness.
Order thy surroundings on earth in such a way,
That they may minister to the desire of thy heart;
(For) at length that day of lamentation shall come,
Wherein he whose heart is still shall not hear the lamentation;

1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, page 742.

never shall exist of grief cease

To beat (again) the heart of a man who is in the grave".[1]

All the literature of the Egyptians, even that which was not destined for a religious purpose, is, full for exceptions, saturated by a religious spirit. Brugsch says in his "Introduction to the Wisdom of the Egyptians", "Many of the virtues which we are apt to suppose a monopoly of Christian culture appear as the ideal of these old Egyptians". He quotes Brugsch as saying, "A thousand voices from the tombs of Egypt declare this". One inscription in upper Egypt says: "He loved his father, he honored his mother, he loved his brethren, and never went from his home in bad-temper". He never preferred the great man to the low one". Another says: "I was a wise man, my soul loved God. I was a brother to the great men and a father to the humble ones, and never was a mischief-maker". An inscription at Sais, or a priest who lived in the sad days of Cambyses, says: "I honored my father, I esteemed my mother. I loved my brethern. I found graves for the unburied dead. I instructed little children. I took care of orphans as though they were my own children. The great misfortunes were on Egypt in my time and on this city of Sais".

In speaking of the ancient books of Egyptian wisdom - the "Phat-Hotep" and the "Ke-Gemni", Dr. Battiscombe Gunn says: "Nor do the oldest books of any other country approach these two in antiquity. To draw comparisons between them let us, in imagination, place ourselves at the period at which Phat-Hotep lived, that is, about B.C. 3650, under King Isesi (Living forever), and take a glance at futurity.".

1. Translated from E.A. Wallis Budge, "The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians", page 243.

"The Babylonians are doubtless exercising their literary talents; but they will leave nothing worthy the need of book by far posterity of fifty-four centuries hence. Thirteen centuries shall pass before Hammurabi, King of Babylon, drafts the code of laws that will be found at that time. Only after two thousand years shall Moses write on the origin of things, and the Vedas be arranged in their present form. It will be two and a half thousand years before the great king of Jerusalem will set in order many proverbs and write books on such resemblance, in form and style, that of Ptah-hotep; before the source and summit of European literature will write his world epics. For the space of years between Solomon and ourselves, great though it seem, is not so great as that between Solomon and Ptah-hotep".[1]

Brown says: "The Instructions of Ptah-hotep and Ke'-gemni possess, apart from the curious nature of their contents, a feature of the greatest interest, and an adequate claim on the notice of all persons interested in literature and its history".[2] There is no reason why the datings and ascriptions in them should not be accepted as trustworthy. They were composed about four thousand years before Christ, and three thousand five hundred and fifty years before Christ, respectively.

Brown goes on to say: "Nothing definite is known concerning these two nobles beyond what is said of them in their works. A fine tomb if a certain Ke'-gemni exists at Memphis;

1. Brown, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", Introd.P XIII.
2. Ibid. Chapter III., page 93.

His titles, so far as can be ascertained, are: Judge of the High Court; Governor of the Land unto its Limit, South and North; Director of every Command. He has sometimes been supposed to be identical with our Ke'gemni; but I am assured by those most competent to judge that this tomb cannot be earlier than the fifth dynasty, - a good three hundred and fifty years from the date assigned to the moralists, - so that the theory that they are one person may be dismissed as highly improbable. No other person of the name is known.

"The position is much the same one with Ptah-hotep. There are near Memphis the tombs of several nobles of this name, of whom two lived in the reign of Isosi; and in this case, again, it has been assumed that one of these two must be the writer of the Instructions. But in neither instance do the titles coincide with or include those assigned to him. The highest title which he bears, Eldest Son of the King, does not anywhere appear in these tombs. It is true that one of these contemporaries was hereditary chief; but we know that Ptah-hotep was a common name at this time, and in the absence of more certain proof it will be well to abstain from the identification of like names upon insufficient grounds".[1]

II. Types of Egyptian Wisdom Literature.

1. The Precepts of Ptah-hotep.

The Instructions of Ptah-hotep claim our attention first, not so much because of the curious nature of their contents, but because of the antiquity of their composition. According to the datings and ascriptions in them they were composed about four

[1] Brown, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", page 95.

thousand years before Christ. So far as we have any record this would be the oldest book in the world, the earliest extant specimen of literary art. For centuries before Ptah-hotep of Memphis summarized, for the benefit of future generations, the leading principles of morality current in his day, books of many kinds had been written, but they have perished. Ptah-hotep lived about B.C. 2550, during the time of King Isosi.

The Instruction of Ptah-hotep (The God Ptah is Satisfied)*

The Instruction of the Governor of his City, the Vizier, Ptah-hotep, in the Reign of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Isosi, living forever, to the End of Time.

A. The Governor of his City, the Vizier, Ptah-hotep; he said: "O Prince my Lord, the end of life is at hand; old age descendeth - upon me -; feebleness cometh, and childishness is renewed. He - that is old - lieth down in misery every day. The eyes are small; the ears are deaf. Energy is diminished, the heart hath no rest. The mouth is silent, and he speaketh no word; the heart stoppeth, and he remembereth not yesterday. The bones are painful throughout the body; good turneth into evil. All taste departeth. These things doeth old age for mankind, being evil in all things. The nose is stopped, and he breatheth not for weakness (?), whether standing or sitting.

"Command thy servant, therefore, to make over my princely authority - to my son - . Let me speak unto him as words of them that hearken to the counsel of the men of old time; those that once hearkened unto the gods. I pray thee, let this thing be done, that sin may be banished from those persons of understanding, that thou may enlighten the lands".

Said the Majesty of this God: "Instruct him, then, in

* Copied from: Brown, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", page 30ff.

the words of old time; may he be a wonder unto the children of princes, that they may enter and hearken with him. Make straight all their hearts; and discourse with him, without causing weariness".

II. Here begin the proverbs of fair speech, spoken by the Hereditary Chief, the Holy Father, Beloved of the God, the eldest Son of the King, of his body, the Governor of his City, the Vizier, Ptah-hotep, when instructing the ignorant in the knowledge of exactness in fair speaking; the glory of him that obeyeth, the shame of him that transgresseth them. He said unto his son:

1. Be not proud because thou art learned; but discourse with the ignorant man, as with the sage. For no limit can be set to skill, neither is there any craftsman that possesseth full advantages. Fair speech is more rare than the emerald that is found by slave-maidens on the pebbles.

4. If thou find an arguer talking, a poor man, that is to say not thine equal, be not scornful toward him because he is lowly. Let him alone; then shall he confound himself. Question him not to please thine heart, neither pour out thy wrath upon him that is before thee; it is shameful to confuse a mean mind. If thou be about to do that which is in thine heart, overcome it as a thing rejected of princes.

6. Cause not fear among men; for - this - the God punisheth likewise. For there is a man that saith, "Therein is life"; and he is bereft of the bread of his mouth. There is a man that saith, "Power - is therein"; and he saith, "I seize for myself that which I perceive". Thus a man speaketh, and he is smitten down. It is another that attaineth by giving unto him that hath not. Never hath that which men have prepared for come to pass; for that which God hath commanded, even that thing shall come to pass. Live, there-

fore, in the house of kindliness, and men shall come and give gifts of themselves.

12. If thou wouldst be a wise man, beget a son for the pleasing of the son. If he make straight his course after thine example, if he arrange thine affairs in due order, do unto him all that is good, for thy son is he, begotten of thine own soul. Sunder not thine heart from him, or thine own begotten shall curse - thee - . If he be heedless and trespass the rules of conduct, and is violent; if every speech that cometh from his mouth be a vile word; then beat thou him, that his talk may be fitting. Keep him from those that make light of that which is commanded, for it is they that make him rebellious. And they that are guided go not astray, but they that lose their hearings cannot find a straight course.

16. If thou be a leader, cause that the rules that thou hast enjoined be carried out; and do all things as one that remembereth the days coming after, when speech availeth not. Be not lavish of favours; it leadeth to servility (?), producing slackness.

17. If thou be a leader, be gracious when thou hearkenest unto the speech of a suppliant. Let him not hesitate to deliver himself of that which he hath that to tell thee; but be desirous of removing his injury. Let him speak freely, that the thing for which he hath come to thee may be done. If he hesitate to open his heart, it is said, "Is it because he - the judge - doeth the wrong that no entreaties are made to him concerning it by those to whom it happeneth?" But a well taught heart yearneth readily.

20. Be not covetous as to ching shakes, in seizing that which is not thine own property. Be not covetous toward thy neighbors; for with a gentleman praise availeth more than fight. He - that

is covetous cometh empty from among his neighbors, being void of the perpuasion of speech. One hath respect for even a little obsequiousness when his belly cooleth.

23. Repeat not extravagant speech, neither listen thereto; for it is the utterance of a body heated by wrath. For such speech is repeater to thee, hearken not thereto, look to the ground. Speak not regarding it, that be that is before thee may learn wisdom. If thou be commanded to do a theft, urge it to pass that the command be taken off thee, for it is a thing hateful according to law. That which destroyeth a vision is the veil over it.

34. Let thy face be bright what time thou livest. That which goeth into the storehouse must come out therefrom; and bread is to be shared. He that is grasping in entertainment shall himself have an empty belly; he that causeth strife causeth himself to sorrow. Take not such an one for thy companion. It is a man's kindly acts that are remembered of him in the years after his life. 'Literally, after his stick or sceptre.

6. If thou obey these things that I have said unto thee, all thy demeanour shall be of the best; for verily, the quality of truth is among their excellences. Set the memory of them in the mouths of the people; for their proverbs are good. For shall any word that hath here been set down cease out of the land forever; but shall be made a pattern whereby princes shall speak well. They - my words - shall instruct a man how he shall speak, after he hath heard them; yea, he shall become as one skillful in obeying, excellent in speaking, after he hath heard them. Good fortune shall befall him, for he shall be of the highest rank. He shall be gracious to the end of his life; he shall be contented always. His knowledge shall be his guide (?) into a place of security,

wherein he shall prosper while on earth. The scholar shall be content in his knowledge. As to the prince, in his town, forsooth, his heart shall be happy; his tongue made straight. And - in these proverbs - his lips shall speak, his eyes shall see, and his ears shall hear, that which is profitable for his son, so that he deal justly, void of deceit.

38. A splendid thing is the obedience of an obedient son; he cometh in and listeneth obediently. Excellent in hearing, excellent in speaking, is every man that obeyeth what is noble, and the obedience of an obeyer is a noble thing. Obedience is better than all things that are; it maketh good-will.

How good it is that a son should take that from his father by which he hath reached old age - obedience.

That which is desired by the God is obedience; disobedience is abhorred of the God.

Verily, it is the heart that maketh its master to obey or to disobey; for the safe and sound life of a man are his heart.

It is the obedient man that obeyeth what is said; he that loveth to obey, the same shall carry out commands.

He that obeyeth becometh one obeyed.

It is good indeed when a son obeyeth his father; and he - his father - that hath spoken hath great joy of it. Such a son shall be mild as a master, and he that heareth him shall obey him that hath spoken. He shall be comely in body and honored by his father. His memory shall be in the mouths of the living, those upon earth, as long as they exist.

(The greater part of this section is a play upon the root Sodem, which in its meaning includes our hear - listen - and obey. This tiresome torture of words is frequent in Egyptian, especially in old religious texts.)

40. As for the fool, devoid of obedience, he doeth nothing. Knowledge he regardeth as ignorance, profitable things are hurtful things. He doeth all kinds of error, so that he is rebuked therefor every day. He lieth in death therewith; it is his food. At chattering speech he marvelleth, as at the wisdom of princes, living in death every day. He is shunned because of his misfortunes, by reason of the multitude of afflictions that cometh upon him every day.

D. If now thou attain thy position, the body shall flourish, the King shall be content in all that thou doest, and thou shalt gather years of life not fewer than I have passed upon earth. I have gathered even five score and ten years of life, for the King hath bestowed upon me favours more than upon my forefathers; this because I wrought truth and justice for the King unto mine old age.

It Is Finished

From Its Beginning To Its End.

Even As Found In Writing.

2. The Instruction of Ke'Gemni (Ke'Gemni - I Have Found a Soul).*

1. The cautious man flourisheth, the exact one is praised; the innermost chamber openeth unto the man of silence. Wide (comfortable) is the seat of the man gentle of speech; but knives are prepared against one that forceth a path, that he advance not, save in due season.

5. Be not haughty because of thy might in the midst of thy young soldiers. Beware of making strife, for one knoweth not the

* Brown, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", p. 117.

things that the God will do when he punisheth.

3. The Instruction of Duauf.*

This Instruction was a favourite work in the schools of the late New Kingdom, and it is, moreover, preserved only in schoolboys' exercises of the Nineteenth Dynasty (about 1300 B.C.) - completely in two papyri, and in parts in several others. The way in which the boys have mangled the text baffles description. There are not many passages in it with regard to which one does not despairingly ask what can have been written there originally; for what the boys have written are only too often meaningless words - they simply did not understand what they had to copy out.(Therefore, the incompleteness of the translation by Adolf' Erman.)

It is not surprising that this work was such a favourite school textbook, for it is written to extol schools and school education, exactly as are the fictitious letters to and from schoolmasters in the New Kingdom. It can be seen from the personal names contained in this Instruction, that it is to be dated to the time between the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Instruction, which a .... man, named Duauf, the son of Khety, composed for his son, named Pepi, when he voyaged up to the Residence, in order to put him in the school of books, among the children of the magistrates ----.

He said unto him: I have seen him that is beaten, him that is beaten: thou art to set thine heart on books. I have beheld him that is set free from forced labour; behold, nothing sur-

* Erman, "The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians", p. 67ff.

[illegible] books.

....

Would that I might make thee love books more than thy mother, would that I might make thee see beauty before thy face. It is greater than any calling. --- If [illegible], and is yet a child, men greet him. He is sent to carry out commands, and he cometh not home that he may [illegible].

....

Never have I seen a sculptor on an errand, nor a goldsmith as he was being sent forth. But I have seen the coppersmith at his work at the mouth of his furnace. His fingers were like those of crocodiles, he stank more than the offal (?) of fishes.

Every artisan that wieldeth the chisel (?), he is wearier than he that delveth; his field is the wood and his hoe is the metal. In the night, when he is set free, he worketh beyond what his arms can do; in the night he kindleth a light.

The barber shaveth late into the evening ---, he betaketh himself from street to street, he seeketh (?) whom he may shave. He wearieth his arms in order to fill his belly, like a bee that feedeth of its work.

.. ..

The gardener bringeth loads, and his arms and neck ache beneath them. At morn he watereth the leeks, and at even the vines ----. It also cometh about that he is sicker than any calling.

....

The cobbler, he faireth ill eternally; he beggeth evermore. He thriveth as well as one thriveth among [illegible]...... What he biteth is leather.

....

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible],
[illegible] his own [illegible] I [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] from [illegible] many activities of political life.

The Document [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] his son this [illegible], by way of [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible] him to keep this [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], and an attempt had been made on his life.

In this [illegible], which the majesty of [illegible] [illegible], the son of Ra, Amenemhat, [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] his son, the Lord of All.

He saith: "Thou that hast appeared as God, hearken to what I shall say to thee, that thou mayest be king of the land, and rule over the river banks, that thou mayest do good in excess of (what is lacking here). [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] ----; Approach them not, and be not alone. Trust not a brother, know not a friend, and make not for thyself intimates, - that profiteth nothing.

If thou sleepest, do thou thyself guard thine own heart, for in the day of adversity a man hath no adherents. I gave to the poor and nourished the orphan, I caused him that had nothing to reach the goal, even as him that was of account.

<u>The Instruction of Amenemhat (The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible])</u>.*

3. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] for thy very life, [illegible] friends [illegible] not for a man in the day of misfortune.

I gave to the beggar, and caused the orphan to live, I made him that had not to attain, even as he that had.

....

* Brown, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", p. [illegible].

It was after supper, when night had come; I had taken an hour of repose, and laid me down upon my bed. I was weary, and my heart began to follow after slumber. Then it was as if weapons were brandished, and as if one inquired (?) concerning me, and I became like a snake of the desert.

I roused me, to fight alone (?), and I found that it was an hand-to-hand affray of the body-guard. When I had quickly taken weapons into mine hand, I drove back the rogues..... But there is no strength by night, and one cannot (?) fight alone, and success will not come without one that protecteth me.

....

I went to Elephantine, I marched into the Delta; I stood upon the spot the boundaries of the land and beheld its circuit. I carried forward the boundaries of my power by my might and by my prowess.

I was one that produced barley and loved the corn-god; the Nile greeted me in every..... None hungered in my years, none thirsted in them. Men dwelt (in peace) through that which I wrought and talked of me (?); all that I commanded was as it should be.

I tamed (?) lions and captured crocodiles. I .... of the Wawa, and captured the Mazoi; I caused the Bedouins to go as dogs. I built me a house adorned with gold; its ceilings are of lapis lazuli..., the floor is....., the doors are of copper, and the bolts of bronze, they are made for everlasting time, and eternity is afraid of them.

Blackman says that the scribbling, on about [illegible] lines of the MS. at this point are almost entirely destroyed, that [illegible], enabled the conclusion, that we can only read disconnected phrase: "There is much talk in the street. I know: 'God' and [illegible] because of its beauty, for he created it not ---- King Sesostris. The feast go. Thou art the one heart, since open face upon (thee). The children have no grasp of happiness beside the people, when they give thee praise.

"Behold, I have wrought at the beginning, and thou (.) commandest at the end ---- the white crown of the living god.

"There is exultation in the boat of Rē.---- Monuments are set up and the tomb is made splendid".

5. <u>The Instruction for King Merikerē.</u>*

Although this work is only known to us from an eighteenth Dynasty copy, we need not hesitate to assign it to an earlier date. As to Merikerē, we only know that he lived in the confused period between the Old and Middle Kingdoms in the second half of the third millennium B.C. - and was one of the kings of Heracleopolis. The kings of the Eleventh Dynasty ruled at Thebes contemporaneously with these monarchs, and, as our book asserts (an assertion now confirmed by inscriptions from Thebes), they fought with one another for the possession of the city of Thinis. The name of the father of Merikerē, who here presents his son with his life's experiences, is unknown to us.

It is worth noting that we meet with religious conceptions in this composition that are practically non-existent in the

* Erman, "The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians", p. 75ff.

other works of the same class.

Only scanty fragments survive of the beginning of the [illegible]. It can be seen that the father who addresses [illegible] is himself a king. Further on, also, long lacunae make interpretation difficult.

(The Value of Speaking Well and of Wisdom).

Be a craftsman in speech, so that thou mayest prevail, for the power of (a man) is the tongue, and speech is mightier than any fighting.---- He that is clever, him the learned attack not, if he is learned and no (harm) happeneth where he is. Truth cometh to him fully kneaded, after the manner of that which the forefathers spake.

Copy thy fathers, that that have gone before thee ----. Behold, their words endure in writing. Open the book and read, and copy the knowledge, so that the craftsman too may become a wise man (?).

(Be Benevolent, but with Prudence).

Be not evil, it is good to be kindly. Cause thy monument to endure through the love of thee. --- Then men thank God on thine account, men praise thy goodness and pray for thine health.

Honour the great and prosper thy people ----; good is it to work for the future. But keep thine eyes open, one that is trusting will become one that is afflicted ----.

(How the King Himself Should Behave).

Do right so long as thou abidest on the earth. Calm the weeper, oppress no widow, expel no man from the possessions of his father, and injure not the magistrates in [illegible] of their

posts. Take heed lest thou punish wrongfully. Slaughter not, that doth not profit thee; punish with mutilation and imprisonment (?). Therewith shall this land be well established (indeed). ---- God knoweth the froward, God requiteth his sins in blood.-- --- Stay not a man whose good qualities thou knowest, with whom thou didst once chant the writings.

"Read in the Sipu-book (?): .....'(who is with God?) goeth boldly forward in inaccessible places. The pool hoopeth to the place that it knoweth; it strayeth not from its [illegible] of yesterday. No magic keepeth it away, but it cometh to them that give it water'".

(Be Just, Energetic, and Pious).

Exalt not the son of one of high degree more than him that is of lowly birth, but take to thyself a man because of his actions. Practise every craft, ---- protect thy boundary and command thy fortresses (?), that the troops may be of service to their master. Make.... monuments for the god; they cause the name of their builder to live again. A man should do that which profiteth his soul: in that he performeth the monthly service of priest, putteth on white sandals, frequenteth the temple, uncovereth the mysteries, entereth the sanctuary, and eateth bread in the temple.

The end: Conduct thy statutes to a distant land-----, speaks also of the enemy and Egypt, and then probably leads on to what follows.

The second part of the treatise, which begins here, refers to various political affairs and to the father's deeds, and is for the most part unintelligible to us, who are unacquainted with them. This king's dominion, as we also know from other

sources, did not comprise the whole of Egypt, and covered a Southern Land as well.

The latter part of the treatise reverts to more general topics: "---Reverence God, and say not: 'He hath a weak mind'. Let not thine arms be limp."Further, with regard to the monuments which another King has erected: "He will not injure them, through desire that what he himself hath done may be maintained by another that cometh after him. There is none that hath no enemy".

At the end comes a general exhortation, of which but little is intelligible:

"Mayest thou reach me without having an accuser. Slay not one that standeth nigh unto thee, after thou hast praised him, and God knoweth him ----. Cause thyself to be beloved by all the world----. Behold, behold, I have spoken unto thee the best of mine inmost thoughts; thou wilt act according to what hath been established before thee (?)."

6. The Instruction of Schetepibre.

This poem to King Amenemhet III (1844-1797 B.C.) is included in the wisdom literature, because its author claims to have composed it for the instruction of his children. He was a high official in the treasury, and must also have been brought into personal contact with the king, for he speaks of himself as "one whom his lord exalted in front of millions, a real confidant of his lord, to whom hidden things were spoken". He, moreover, proclaims this close connection with his lord by placing - against all precedent - the following verses on his tombstone, which he scholastically designates the "Instruction".

"Instruction which he composed for his children.
I tell of a great matter and cause you to hear (it).
I impart to you a thought for eternity, and a guide for right living (?) and for the spending of a life time in bliss.
Revere King Nemaatre, who ever liveth, in your bodies, and consort with his majesty in your hearts.
He is Understanding, which is in the hearts, and his eyes search out everybody. He is RE, by whose beams men see.
He illumineth the Two Lands more than the sun. He maketh the Two Lands more verdant than doth a high Nile. He hath filled the Two Lands with strength and life.

. . . .

He that is a friend of the king, - he shall be an honoured one. But there is no tomb for him that is a foe of his majesty, and his corpse is thrown into the water.
Do this, that your bodies may be sound, yea, it is profitable for you forever".

7. The Wisdom of Anii.//

This book is a late imitation of the old books of wisdom, and resembles them in this respect also, that in it, as in them, a father is propounding his teaching to his son. But the range of this work seems to be wider and its tone livelier - I say "seems", for, unfortunately, unless a new manuscript turns up, we shall never be able to understand [illegible]

* Erman, "The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians", p. [illegible].
// Budge, "The Wisdom of the Egyptians", p. [illegible].

fragments of Anii's wisdom. The schoolboy, who copied out the papyrus, has made mistakes in the writing of many of the words, and for the length of whole sentences has had absolutely no idea of what the subject under discussion was. Probably he did not understand much of what his book contained, for although it is written in New Egyptian, this language already belonged to a period separated some three to four hundred years from a schoolboy of the Twenty-first or Twenty-second Dynasty, and thus much of it might have been obscure to him. We have evidence, moreover, that this was actually the case. The Berlin Museum possesses the writing equipment of a schoolboy, who likewise lived in the Twenty-second Dynasty, including a writing-board, upon which are written what were originally the opening words of our book. And yet he already had to add to these words a rendering in the language that was familiar to him.

"Beginning of the exhortation (instruction) which (the commencement of the scribe Anii composed) of the house of Nefer(te)ri-tari". With this last name we might possibly associate a similarly named king at the end of the Old Kingdom, and suppose that the author of the work wished to place his scene in that period, although he gave him and his son names belonging to the New Kingdom.

(Follow my Words).

(I tell thee) that which is excellent, that which thou shalt ponder (?) in thine heart. Do it, and so thou wilt be good, and all evil is far from thee.---- It will be said of thee: a good character, and not: he is stupid, he is [illegible]. Accept my words, and so will all evil be far from thee".

(Be Prudent in Speech (?))

Unintelligible.

....

(Be Discreet on Visits).

Enter not the (house?) of another,-----. Speak not of that which is not right in (his?) house; thine eye may see it, but thou keepest silent,. Speak not of it to another outside, that it may not become for thee a great crime worthy of death, when it is heard (?).

....

(Be Reserved in thy Conduct).

Go not in and out in the court of justice, that thy name may not stink ----. Speak not much, be silent, that thou mayest be happy. Be not a godsip.

(The True Piety).

The dwelling of God abhorreth clamour. Pray with a loving heart, all the words whereof are hidden. Then he will do what thou needest; he will hear what thou sayest and accept thine offering.

(Piety Towards Parents).

Offer water to thy father and thy mother, who rest in the desert-valley ----. Omit not to do it, that thy son may do the like for thee.

(Be Not a Drunkard).

Take not upon thyself (?) to drink a jug of beer. Thou speakest and unintelligible utterance issueth from thy mouth. If thou falleth down and thy limbs break, there is none to hold out a hand to thee. Thy companions in drink stand up and say: "Away with this not !". If there (then) cometh one to seek

thee in order to question thee, thou are found lying on the ground, and thou art like a little child.

(Lead an Honest Life).

Go not forth from thine house to one that thou knoweth not (?) ---- let every place that thou favourest be known.

.....

After a section concerning - Be Mindful of Death, a fresh section of some length begins, in which, firstly, caution in social intercourse is enjoined - most of it frankly unintelligible.

"Behold, I tell thee yet other excellent things, which thou shalt heed (?) in thine heart. Do them, and thou will be happy, and all evil will be far from thee....."

(Caution in Social Intercourse).

"Keep thyself far from an hostile man, and take him not to thee for a companion. Make to thyself a friend (rather) of one that is upright, and righteous, when thou seest what he hath done (?)----".

"Make not a friend of the slave of another, whose sake stinketh -----. If one pursueth him in order to seize him, and to take away him that is in his house, thou art wretched and sayest: 'What am I to do?'------".

(Possessions Do not Make for Happiness).

A man constructeth a house for himself. A piece of ground (?) is laid out for thee, thou hast fenced in (?) a quadrant of herbs in front of thine arable land; thou hast glossed sycamores inside ----- and thou fillest thine hand with all flowers that thine eye perceiveth. (But) with them all one is wretched".

"Put not thy trust in the possessions of another; guard thyself from doing that (?). Rely not on the things of another -----. Say not: 'The father of my mother hath an house -----. For when it cometh to the division with thy brethren, thy chart (is only) a storehouse. If thy god grants that a child be born to thee....."

(Be Respectful).

"Sit not when another standeth, one that is older than thou, or that hath occupied himself in his calling longer than thou....."

The subject with which the passages immediately following are concerned, cannot even be conjectured.

(Usefulness of Knowledge).

"Men do all that thou sayest, if thou art skilled in the writings. Devote thyself to the writings, and put them in thine heart, and then all that thou sayest is excellent. To whatsoever office the scribe is appointed, he consulteth the writings. There is no son for the superintendent of the treasury, no heir for the superintendent of the fortress,------ the officer, which have no children....-----".

(Be Cautious in Speech).

Speak not out thine heart to the... man ----. A wrong word that hath gone forth from thy mouth, if (he?) repeateth it, thou makest enemies (for thyself). A man falleth in ruin because of his tongue----. A man's belly is broader than a granary, and is full of all manner of answers. Choose thou out the good and speak them, while the bad remain imprisoned in thy belly. ----

Of a truth thou will ever be with me and answer his

that injureth me with falsehood, the spirit of God who judgeth the righteous. His fate cometh to carry him off.

(Relations With God).

Make offering to thy god and keep thyself from transgressing against him. Inquire not concerning his form; walk not with swaggering gait, when he goeth forth in procession; press not forward to carry him. ---- Let thine eye watch how he is wroth, and have respect for his name. It is he that giveth power (.) to millions of forms, and (only) he is made great whom he maketh great. The god of this land is the Sun which is in the horizon, (but) his images are on earth; to them let incense be offered daily.

(On Wealth and it's Instability).

Eat not bread, if another is suffering want, and thou dost not stretch out the hand to him with bread. ----. One is rich and another is poor ----. He that was rich in past years, is this year a groom. Be not greedy about filling thy belly -----. The course of the water of last year, it is this year in another place. Great seas have become dry places, and banks have become abysses. - - - -

(On Paying Visits).

Go not freely to a man in (his) house, but enter in (only) when thou art bidden. When he hath said to thee "Praise be thee" with his mouth, - - - -. (Then after an unintelligible passage): give him to God and give him daily again to God. The morrow is as to-day, Thou wilt see what God will do, if he bewildereth (?) him that hath bewildered (?) thee.

(Keep Thyself From Tumults).

Enter not into a crowd, if thou findest that it is ready for beating - - - - - that thou mayest not be [illegible] in the Court before the magistrates after the hearing of lying-hood, keep thee far from hostile people - - - - .

(Treat Thy Wife Well).

Act not the official over thy wife in her house, if thou knowest that she is excellent. Say not unto her: "Where is it? Fetch it us", if (?) she hath put (it) in the right place. Let thine eye observe and be silent, that so (?) thou mayest know her good deeds. (She is) happy when thine hand is with her - - - -. Thereby the man ceaseth to stir up strife in his house - - - -.

(Behaviour Towards Superiors).

Answer not a superior who is enraged, get out of his way. Say what is sweet, when he saith what is bitter to any one, and make calm his heart. Contentious answers carry rods, and thy strength collapseth. Rage directeth itself (?) against thy [illegible], therefore [illegible] (?) not thine own self. He returneth about and praiseth thee quickly, after his hour is over. If thy words are soothing for the heart, the heart inclineth to receive them. Seek out silence for thyself, and submit to what he doeth.

(Stand Well With the Police).

Make a friend of the herald of thy quarter, and let him not become enraged with thee. Give him dainties when thou art in thine house, and when thou [illegible]. Say to him: "Praise be to thee" - - - - -.

(An unusually long passage is followed by a dialogue, with which the book closes.)

8. The "Teaching of Amen-em-ope".

This work will not be described here since it is briefly mentioned in part III of this chapter and discussed at length in Chapter V.

III. Character of Egyptian Wisdom Literature.

1. Conclusions drawn from Wisdom Literature.

The character of the Egyptian Wisdom Literature is apparently of the same tenor as that of the Hebrews. Most all of the productions emphasize the leading principles of morality current at the particular time of writing. These principles are full of sound sense and could be followed to-day with profit to the observer. The beauty of this literature is that it is so practical.

The wisdom literature is saturated, so to speak, with a religious spirit. This is manifest in the reverence for their gods, the love of all living things, and a genuine appreciation of the beauties of nature, which a native Egyptian qualities of mind. They also, as is shown by their writings, urge reverence for rulers and superiors.

The Wisdom of Ptah-hotep stresses maxims concerning courtesey, diligence, faithfulness to trusts, humility, self-restraint, purity, loyalty to friends, love of wife and family, and kindness to dependents.

The Instruction of Ke 'Gemni is a simple treatise on deportment

The Instruction of Duauf differs some from the other types of wisdom literature in that it extols schools and a school educatinn. In his advice to his son the father insists that his son obtain knowledge, or be diligent in learning, for it is much more digni-

fied, a pleasanter, and an easier life than any of the trades or occupations; it is "the most beautiful and honorable of callings".

The Instruction of King Amenemhēt is different from the other writings in that it is of a cynical nature. The father wanns his son not to put an confidence in those about him. This advice is due to what the father had suffered. His subjects had rebelled, he had reaped ingratitude, and even an attempt had been made upon his life. We might say that this writing is so pessimistic as to be depressing.

The Instruction of King Merikerē, as is characteristic of the previous writings, is full of good sound advice. The value of wisdom is again stressed, also the value of speaking well, which reminds one of a maxim of our own day, "The tongue (or pen) is mightier than the sword". Benevolence, prudence, justice, kindness, industry, reverence for God, and piety are all recommended.

The Instruction of Sehetepibrē is rather brief, but we have enough of it to know that a father composed it for his children to impress upon their minds the value of certain maxims conducive to right living.

The Wisdom of Anii is much richer in content, and fresher and more artistic in expression. It urges not merely the moral virtues of purity, temperance, modesty of speech, a gracious demeanour alike at home, in the street, and in social fellowship, kindness, consideration for the poor and aged, reverence towards parents, but also the strictly religious obligations of chaste, and loving worship, prayer, praise and sacrifice.

Within the whole range of Egyptian literature, the " "Teaching of Amen-em-ope" is unique in its religious and ethical standpoint. He has a remarkable conception of God. To him God is perfect; He stands for justice, He is full of loving kindness. Throughout his teaching he shows a strongly marked tendency towards a monotheistic conception of God. He insists on those things which are well-pleasing in the sight of God. He cannot say enough in his praise of humility. As important as these teachings are there is another: Amen-em-ope's teaching on man's duty to his neighbor, which in its way is as remarka le as his conception of God. Indeed, his "thoughts and teaching about God, and his precepts on men's behaviour to one another are confessedly unique in Egyptian Wisdom literature. They are to be paralleled in their fulness lesewhere only in the Hebrew scriptures".[1]

So in seven of the examples of Egyptian Wisdom literature we may summarize by saying that they put the emphasis on religion and morality.

1. Oesterley, Article in "Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft", p. 11.

Chapter IV.

BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

CHAPTER IV

BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURE.

I. Introduction.

It remained for Stephen Langdon, M.A., Professor of Assyriology, Oxford, to furnish us with valuable information concerning Babylonian Wisdom. For the first time, in 1923, he has edited together Babylonian [illegible] literature of the Hebrews and the Egyptians. This edition contains the following: "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer", "The Dialogue of Pessimism", "The Book of Proverbs", and "The [illegible]".

None of these Babylonian books is complete, [illegible]. However, [illegible] of this kind of literature are certainly [illegible] time [illegible].

II. Types of Babylonian Wisdom Literature.

1. The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer.

"The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" has [illegible] been called "the Babylonian Job". [illegible], indeed, [illegible] to have the greatest part of this Babylonian [illegible] t-e[illegible] [illegible]

a

R

-ritual philosophy. The fundamental conception of religious thinking is that evil is the creation of God to punish sin. Sin may be an immediate punishment or it may not be until future generations. The following will give a outline of the poem:

Tablet I.

1. lud-lul bel ni-me-ki	1. I will praise the lord of wisdom.
....	
.... -[illegible]	....
....	
.... ta-r[illegible]	.... [illegible].
.... [illegible]	.... I may [illegible].
....	....
[illegible]-ri-tu-[illegible] a-tur [illegible]	Although I was powerful, I am
ri-[illegible]-ši (13)	become a slave.
[illegible]-al-bu-[illegible] tap-pi-[illegible] ú-	The frenzy of a companion has
[illegible]-ga-[illegible]-an-ni (14)	destroyed me.
....	....
[illegible]u ki-[illegible]-i-[illegible] i-[illegible]	[illegible], [illegible]
-[illegible] [illegible] (21)	[illegible].

Tablet II.

(In Tablet II there are fifty-five verses, almost all of which are complete.)

1. [illegible]-ad-[illegible] a-[illegible] ba-l[illegible]	1. I have attained unto the allotted
[illegible]-[illegible]-ma i-te-ik	length of life, yea I have
	passed beyond it.
2. [illegible]-[illegible]-[illegible]-ma li-[illegible]	2. If I look about me, there is
li-[illegible]-ma	evil upon evil.

....	....
4. [illegible] mi-si-e-ne ul [illegible]-li-ne ma-ni-šu	4. I have cried unto God, but he showed not his face unto me.
....	....
5. [illegible] rû [illegible] hi-ir šu-[illegible] ul [illegible]	5. The king in [illegible] has [illegible] and [illegible] of our [illegible].
....	....
8. [illegible]-li-ṭu [illegible] ul u-[illegible]-ti [illegible]-ni	8. I [illegible] and he turned [illegible] me [illegible].
....	....
24. [illegible]-li-ti ta-ši-[illegible]-ti ni -ḳu-u [illegible]-ú-[illegible]	24. Supplication [illegible], sacrifice [illegible].
....	....
39. ša ina [illegible] [illegible]-lu-ṭu i- -mut [illegible]-li-šú	39. He who was alive yesterday evening is dead to-day.

Reverse.

(In the Reverse there are fifty-five verses, practically every one wholly destroyed. Only a few of the verses will be given as examples.)

4. [illegible]-ti [illegible]-šat í-[illegible]-[illegible]- iš [illegible]-ni-i-ba	4. [illegible] like a willow they have ceased to bend.
....	....
7. ki-ma šu-uš-[illegible]-li ú-[illegible]- [illegible]-ni [illegible]-tu	7. Like a net trouble has covered me.
8. [illegible]-ga-a-[illegible] ul i-[illegible]-at-[illegible] i-[illegible]-a	8. My eyes look but [illegible].
9. [illegible]-a ul i-[illegible]-ma-a [illegible]	9. My ears are open but they hear not.

10. Ṭal pag-ri-ia i-ḫa-ḫaz ri-mu-tu — 10. Weariness takes hold of my whole body.

11. mi-šit-tu im-ta-qut eli šîri-ia — 11. Apoplexy has fallen upon my flesh.

....

17. [i]-ša-an-sa-a-ni ša-'i-li ul ap-pal — 17. My soothsayer-priest cries to me and I answer not.

....

47. ul i-ru-ṣa ilu ṣa-ti ul iṣ-bat — 47. God came not to my aid, he took not my hand.

Tablet III.

(In Tablet III Langdon gives fifty-nine verses, not quite so complete as those in Tablet II. Here we get our information through two different dreams. The sufferer relates his visions in direct discourse. The first dream is described in Tablet III Obverse 9-20; the second, in (21-37). The reverse of Book III describes the release from pain in terms almost identical with those of an ordinary penitential psalm.)

1. kab-ta-at kat-su ul a-li-' na-ša-ša — 1. Heavy was his hand, I was not able to bear it.

37. iq-bi-ma a-ḫu-lap danniš šu-nu-ḫ-ma — 37. He commanded for me mercy — me too mightily afflicted.

....

59. e-ga-ti-ia u-ša-bil šâru — 59. The wind he caused to bear away my transgressions.

[illegible] 55 Reverse.

....	....
22. šun-ta-a-a ša il-lak-ka il-ka-a rib-[ba-ta]	22. My lips which [illegible] possessed in [illegible],
23. ik-pur pul-ḫat-si-na-ma ki-ṣir-ši-na ip-[ṭur]	23. He dispelled their fear and [illegible] of their [illegible].

2. The Babylonian Dialogue of Pessimism.

The argument of this work is in the form of a dialogue between an influential and wealthy master and his servant or slave. The replies of the servant represent the current scepticism of the age, and there is no parallel to this literary form in Babylonian literature, or elsewhere.

In its present form the theme of the dialogue is one of complete pessimism and despair. This point of view is logically maintained. "In Hebrew literature the Book of Ecclesiastes offers a close parallel, but the Hebrew poet is not so consistently gloomy. The illustrations employed by the Babylonian poet to unfold his argument are often very similar to those of Ecclesiastes. That the cycle of Babylonian wisdom literature to which the dialogue belongs influenced Hebrew thought in Post-Exilic times and especially the author of Ecclesiastes may no longer be doubted".[1]

Three tablets represent the text of the Dialogs.

Langdon has made "There is no advantage in living", the subject of Section B; line 16 in this section reads: "Eating and eating, thirsting and drinking on every man". Or, transliterated: "[illegible]-ru-u a-[illegible]-la [illegible] [illegible] illa[illegible]."

The meaning is whether a man eats or fasts, he will find not. There is no pleasure provided for man even in [illegible].

1 Langdon, Babylonian Wisdom, p. 68.

Sirach 31:19 in Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha I 421 has it in these words: "A little is sufficient for a man of understanding".

The theme of section J is: "A benefactor and a malefactor obtain the same rewards". I take this section particularly because the argument in it is similar to that of Ecclesiastes 9:2. "There is one fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the pure, and for the unclean, for him that sacrificeth, and for him that sacrificeth not. As with the good so with the sinner; he that sweareth vainly is as he that feareth the oath".

Lines 37-39 of this section contain the most powerful expression of pessimism in Babylonian literature. The good and the bad among the ancients lie beneath the ruins of their cities and their deeds are forgotten. The present generation retains no sentiment of honour or dishonour for them. In the "land of no return" they are now all alike.

The theme of Section K is: "Death is preferable to life".

33. ardu mi-tan-gur-an-ni an-nu-u be-lí an-nu-u	33. "Oh servant, hearken unto me". Yes, my lord, yes.
34. e-nin-na mi-nu-ú ṭa-a-ba	"Now then what is good?"
35. ti-ik-ki ti-ik-ka-ka še-bi-ir	To break my neck and thy neck,
36. a-na nâri na-ša-ku ṭa-a-ba	To fall into the river is good.
37. mâ-ú ar-ku ša a-na šamê e-lu-u	Who is long enough to ascend unto heaven?
38. mâ-ú rap-šu ša irṣi-tim ú-gam-me-ru	Who is broad enough to compass the earth?
39. e ardu a-dak-ka-ma pa-na-	"Nay, Oh servant, I will slay thee

-tū-u-[illegible] u-šal-lak-ka and cause thee to go before me".

40. ù be-li lu 3 û-mi ki-i arki[illegible] Oh my lord, in truth are but

-iā i-bal-lu-ṭu three days that they live after me.

In this the poet arrives at the logical conclusion of his skepticism. "Life is a troublesome gift of the gods and death is the only happiness attainable by man. He is powerless to control the course of nature. This is an extreme expression of pessimism not found elsewhere in Babylonian literature".[1] This conclusion of despair and skepticism was first expressed in Babylonia and consistently advocated only by certain radical thinkers there.

"In the Babylonian Dialogue the master agrees to this teaching of the servant. But let the servant first prove his conviction by being slain first and preceding his master into the land of death. This the servant agrees to, sarcastically observing that all who now live will shortly pass away. The last line contains another gloomy observation on the brevity of life which makes it appear as quite futile. It recalls the phraseology of a passage in the bilingual book of proverbs which also refers to life as a brief period of 'three days'. 'The life of the day before yesterday is departed'. Similar observations abound in Babylonian pessimistic literature. Compare the Book of the Righteous Sufferer, Tablet II, Obverse 39f.

1. Langdon, Babylonian Wisdom, p. 81.

'He who was alive yesterday is dead to-day.

Quickly is he cast into gloom, suddenly is he crushed'.

The Assur text 2 has the following colophon: 'Ana Ludlul-bel nimeki - a text. According to its original, it was written and collated".[1]

3. The Bilingual Book of Proverbs.

This is the only extensive tablet of Bilingual proverbs extant. Langdon has published it in the American Journal of Semitic Languages, Vol. 28, 217-243, translated and transcribed it, ibid. 217-230. Since there are other fragments of the same kind in the Ashurbanipal Library one may speak of books or tablets of bilingual proverbs. Fragments from smaller tablets of the same kind are published, ibid. 242-243. "In content this class of wisdom literature stands midway between the Biblical Ecclesiastes or the Dialogue of Pessimism and the instructions of the Babylonian Book of Proverbs. These tablets appear to have been written as learned dissertations on life, religion and ethics. The style is almost exclusively unphilosophical or speculative".[2] The introduction and all of the first column of obverse are lost and so also are the last column and colophon of the large tablet. But the following is a phrase of a Sumerian proverb which has been found in Sumerian, "Writing is the mother of speaking and the father of skilled men". The continuation is lost [illegible]

1. Langdon, "Babylonian Wisdom", p. 31.

2. Ibid. p. [illegible].

proverbs relate mostly to speculative literature and learning and have not the object of teaching moral practical ethics. They represent the contemplative literature of Babylonia and were, therefore, composed in Sumerian and translated into Semitic. Stephen Langdon is of the opinion that the Sumerian version was written by Semitic scribes. He thinks they originally came from the time of the First Babylonian Dynasty. But the Sumerian is no criterion proving its proof of their great antiquity. "This class of literature, of which not a single Babylonian tablet has been found, may have been written by Assyrian scholars and may have been unknown in Babylonia. On this assumption it is late in origin, later than the ninth century at any rate. This is, however, improbable in view of the fact that all other wisdom literature in Assyria was copied from Babylonian originals".[1]

The following are some examples of the proverbs:

21. "Evil thou shalt not do and so an everlasting (reward) thou wilt obtain."

(22-28 are destroyed on the tablet).

29. "Though I toil they take away from me, but though I toil more and again who rewards me!"

30. "A well where no water is (a man) digs and toils without gain he raises".

33 and 34. "They say, 'Let a marsh that empty for itself the price of its reeds, or a field the price of its vegetation'" "But a strong man lives for the price of his arms and the road

1. Ibid. pp. 32-33.

from the power of his children". (Meditation upon the frailty of man compared with the fertility and independence of nature).

35. Mutilated.

37. He is entirely good, yet he is [illegible].

41. Obliterated.

49. "A bird [illegible] and its [illegible] is [illegible] and its body is divided." (A satire on divination by augury).

50 and 51. "The life of the day before yesterday is [illegible]. Like a chair which in the month Tebet thou fashionest well and at the end of the year thou castest away." (These two proverbs both refer to periods of time based upon the figure 3). In 50 life is limited to three days and in 51 a chair is thrown away after three months.[1]

59. "As for man his departure the carpenter buildeth".

61 and 62. Obliterated.

65. "Like an oven which has become old [illegible] is difficult (or, it is difficult to change [illegible])."

67. "[illegible] are baked but the drinking bowl..... it [illegible]".

68-74. Obliterated.

Fragments of Similar Texts.

Sm. 61.

"Upon a glad heart oil is poured but [illegible] it. The giving of a king is the [illegible] of a cup bearer. (Liberality obtains good services).

The giving of a king is the [illegible] of a prophet. (A satire on divination. A [illegible] gift [illegible] from a seer).

1. Cf. K [illegible] the Dialogue of Pessimism, line [illegible].

"Friendship is of a day, but prosperity is of eternity. A leader (if he go to) another city will become its head". This proverb curiously anticipated the famous saying recorded in the New Testament, "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country".

"A ring does not give [illegible]". (A satire on the [illegible] of amulets).

Bu. 80-7-19, 130.

"The ox of a stranger he feedeth on grass, but the ox of his enemy shall be afflicted."

The proverbs of these collections differ generally from the more [illegible] witticisms which were current among the people. The Babylonian and Assyrian languages was undoubtedly rich in sharp and witty folk-sayings and humorous words. At least two of their popular proverbs are known from a letter of an Assyrian king, presumably Esarhaddon, addressed to certain people whom he calls "The non-Babylonians". These, perhaps, have falsely claimed to be Babylonians and have slandered the kings' subjects. They had intrigued themselves into a false and dangerous situation and the king applies two popular proverbs to them.

'Everywhere in the mouth of the people it is said as proverb, "If the dog of a potter has entered into an oven it howls in the heart of the potter"'. The meaning seems to be that if one has become entangled in difficulties he should appeal to those who caused the difficulties.

"And again his reply contains the following saying.

'Everywhere in the mouth of the people it is said as proverb, "A sinful (woman) stands at the gate of the house of a judge

- [illegible]".

"The [illegible] influenced by the attractions of [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible]. The second [illegible] not in such manner".

4. [illegible]

[illegible] of the Society of Biblical [illegible], 1916, [illegible], and [illegible]. [illegible] The book is characterised by the phrase "My God", [illegible] in the form of [illegible]. The [illegible] parallel [illegible], a dialogue [illegible] the Eloquent [illegible].

[illegible] indicates [illegible] the purpose of [illegible] of the [illegible]

[illegible], "The [illegible] Wisdom", pp. [illegible]-27.

2. Ibid. pp. [illegible]-27.

[illegible] ( ).
[illegible]
[illegible] (?)."
....

Section 1.

"Not shalt thou [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]"

Section 2.

"Talk not with thy mouth, but guard thy lips.
The thoughts of thy mind speak thou not at once;
For then quickly, what thou hast spoken, wilt thou take back
again,"

Section 3.

"Daily thy god adore,
With sacrifice and prayer, becoming to incense offerings.
This is that is becoming unto divinity.
Prayer, praise and supplication on thy face,
Daily shalt thou give him and thy power will be great.
And in abundance wilt thou have converse with god.
In thy learning read thou on the tablet.
Fear (of god) begetteth favour (of god).
Sacrifice increaseth life,
And prayer dissolveth sin.
As for him that fears the gods, not will (his god) neglect him.
He that fears the Anunnaki will lengthen (his days)".[1]

1. Langdon, "Babylonian Wisdom", pp. 89-92.

5. The Supposed Rules of Monthly Wind.

Langdon says that this is "one of the most antiquarian documents in cuneiform literature".[1] It does not correspond exactly to its title, since it is not a tablet of dietary rules, but a series of imprecations against the demons wishing them all manner of objectionable food throughout the twelve months of the year. The second column contains a series of paragraphs in which the man, now rescued from the demons by the rituals of incantation, proceeds to celebrate his deliverance and to ridicule the demons. The entire tablet consists of six long columns, of which the first two seem to have the above solutions. Column III seems to be a series of curses of which a few signs only are preserved, and they do not appear to have any connection at all with the subject. Columns I-III of the Reverse show very little sense. Reverse III contains a list of deities and the names of the cities in which they were worshipped. A few examples follow from Columns I-II:

Col. I

.....	.....
7. arabzamna ni-na-ú ú-kul-ta-ka	7. In the eighth month that shall be thy food.
8. su-ug-gi-ra i-na lap-ti	8. [illegible] with [illegible]
9. u ṣipeṣ-ta-ina [illegible] ta-pat-ta	9. and roads with the plant.... ..... those shall not.
.....	.....
15. [arab Ṭeb]it ni-na-ú ú-kul-ta-ka	15. In the month Tebit that shall be thy food.

1. Langdon, "Babylonian Wisdom", p. 93.

14. [ṣi-ir-ri-it u] sî ṭa-ri-e še ina be-ṣi ?-ru-lu	14. (Ears of the corn) which were laid in the [illegible].
15. [ú ra-bi-ik] [illegible]-ši še nâr Puratti	15. and a mixture of the gruel (?) brought [illegible] the Euphrates
16. ta-pat-tan	16. shall thou eat (in future).

Col. II.

....

18. a-lu-ši-in mi-na-a te-li-'-i	18. And so then! what canst thou do?
19. a-ši-pu-ta [illegible]-lu-am a-na ṭe-ip-ša ul ug-ra	19. Have been not designed the craft of the magician altogether for my reward?
20. a-lu-ši-in ši-i a-ši-pu-ut-ka	20. And so then! over against thy witchcraft

....

23. pa-na-a a-[ril]-ka še-in-nu u-ma-al-la	23. [illegible] I [illegible] ready and I fill the [illegible] vessel.
24. gi?-pu-ta a-na-ku-ma i-ša-ta a-kal	24. [illegible] I was ready and a fire I kindle

....

26. [illegible] še bîti [illegible] ṣîru [illegible] ul [illegible]-zib	26. The [illegible] spider [illegible] house, the serpent and the scorpion are not [illegible].[1]

1. Langdon, "Babylonian Wisdom", pp. 94-99.

6. The Gilgamish Epic.

The most beautiful, most impressive, and the most extensive poem which has been preserved to us of the literature of the ancient Babylonians is the Gilgamesh Epic. It is heroic both in form and content, yet it is crowded with mythological material of the greatest interest. To students of the Old Testament it is of peculiar interest because it contains as an episode the Babylonian legend of the Flood, which lies at the basis of the Old Testament stories of the Deluge.

Originally the epic consisted of twelve large tablets, every one of which had three columns of writing on both obverse and reverse. Many of these have come to us in sadly broken condition, and of some only fragments remain. The text, as we have it, belonged to the great library of Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.) and is written for the most part in Assyrian script, though a few fragments are in Neo-Babylonian. The name of the poet who produced this version is Siri-liki-unnimi, but there are numerous allusions on the tablets to their having been copied from older originals, and two such have been preserved which were written during the first Babylonian dynasty (c. 2000 B.C.).

This epic describes the friendship and adventures of the famous ancient heroes Gilgamesh and Engidu, and Gilgamesh's search for eternal life after the death of his friend, in the course of which he comes to his ancertor Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah, who tells him the story of the flood (the 11th canto).

This work is mentioned here briefly, because a Hebrew parallel is discussed in Chapter VI.

III. Character of the Babylonian Wisdom Literature.

1. Conclusions drawn from Wisdom Literature.

In Babylonia all knowledge was more or less tinged with a mystic aspect. "Wisdom" was essentially confined to the cult of the water god and the gods associated with that cult, especially Nebo, god of writing and philosophy. According to the Babylonian cosmology, Wisdom dwelt in the depths of the sea with Ea, the creative deity.

To a certain extent (not so much so as in the case of the Hebrew wisdom literature) the Babylonian wisdom literature is of a religious nature. It also contains much that is practical in its maxims of conduct. Many of these proverbs are blessed with their share of common sense.

The Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer is not a great deal like the other types of wisdom literature products. It is tinged with scepticism and pessimism. Contrary to the ordinary penitential psalms, which never accuse god of injustice, his injustice is emphasized in this poem.

Besides the characteristics of the poem that have already been mentioned we may add that it is in its nature, theological, philosophical, and ethical. In fact, it is a real contribution to the world's literature and a valuable exposition of Babylonian ethical philosophy. The fundamental conception of Babylonian ethics was that evil is the creation of god to punish sin. A thorough study of this poem would give us quite a slant on the religious life and beliefs of the Babylonians.

The Babylonian Dialogue of Pessimism, as its title suggests, has a pessimistic attitude in common with the preceding poem, only the poet in the former is more

orthodox. The argument of this work is put in the form of a dialogue between a master and a servant or slave. In the replies of the servant the current scepticism of the age is represented, and it is worth noting that there is no parallel to this literary form in Babylonian literature, or elsewhere. More insight into the Babylonian religion is furnished us in this poem. In the Dialogue of Pessimism life is considered a troublesome gift of the gods and death is the only happiness attainable by man, who is powerless to control the course of nature. Here we have an extreme expression of pessimism not found elsewhere in Babylonian literature.

In content the Bilingual Book of Proverbs stands midway between the absolute pessimism of the Dialogue of Pessimism and the instructions of the Babylonian Book of Proverbs. "These tablets appear to have been written as learned dissertations on life, religion and ethics. The didactic element is strictly subservient to the philosophical or speculative".[1] The following quotation was found in the Sumerian, "Writing is the mother of speakers, and the father of skilled men". "This implies that these proverbs belong really to speculative literature and learning and have not the object of teaching mankind practical ethics. They represent the contemplative literature of Babylonia and were, therefore, composed in Sumerian and translated into Semitic".[2]

1. Langdon, Babylonian Wisdom, p. 82.

2. Ibid. p. 82.

The Babylonian Book of Proverbs is the Babylonian parallel to the Hebrew Proverbs of Solomon., and to the Egyptian Proverbs of Ani. It is characterized by the phrase "my son", and written in the form of instructions by a father. Throughout the production there are lofty ethical sentiments, one in particular commands to reward evil with good. "Unto him that doeth thee evil shalt thou return good".

The Supposed Rules of Monthly Diet is one of the most enigmatical documents in cuneiform literature. The title is misleading, for it is not a tablet of dietary rules as one would naturally suppose, but a series of imprecations against the demons wishing them all manner of objectionable food throughout the twelve months of the year. There is so little of this document intelligible that it is difficult to characterize it. However, we gain from it the names of the months, and the nature, or kinds of foods used.

The Gilgamesh Epic is not strictly wisdom literature, but is mentioned here because of its influence upon the early stories, especially that of the Flood, of the Old Testament, and because it furnishes a short parallel to Ecclesiastes.

Chapter V.

POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN HEBREW AND EGYPTIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

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1. Did Egyptian Literature Have a Direct Influence upon the Literature of the Hebrews?

Scholars have long pointed out certain similarities between the two, especially in the "wisdom literature". But the similarities have been of general form and thought, rather than of actual agreement of content. Recently, an Egyptian document has appeared in which there are striking verbal agreements with a section of the Biblical Book of Proverbs.

In 1923 Sir Wallis Budge published a British Museum papyrus, with a translation,[1] which contained a book of Egyptian wisdom literature called, "The Admonitions of Amenemope". He noted two points of similarity between this book and the Book of Proverbs. A short time later Erman himself translated the document into German,[2] and then made a comparison of it with the Book of Proverbs,[3] finding in several places a direct relationship between the two which he considered could scarcely be accidental. Professor Gressmann has made a report of Erman's study, together with some further observations of his own. This papyrus was found inside a painted wooden figure of Osiris in a tomb in Thebes. The general characteristics indicate that it was written during the twenty-first or twenty-second Dynasty,

1. Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Second Series, 1923. Plates 1-14; pp. 9-18, 41-51.

thereto

Quelle ?

all of them, on thy tongue".

Here we have an introduction to an independent collection of Proverbs, Prov. 22:17-24:22. This collection differs in style and form from the previous part of the book, and in the Revised Version the section is separated from the rest of the text by spacing. It is within this section that we find the parallels to the Egyptian Amenemope. Professor Toy places the compilation in the third century B.C. In the "International Critical Commentary" he says: "It differs in some respects from the preceding collection: it is in the form of an address to the pupil who is called the son; it is hortatory, argumentative, descriptive, and it is arranged in strophes instead of couplets".[1] The Egyptian papyrus is of the same nature.

Comparing the passages more closely, the Egyptian reads: "Incline thine ears and hear my sayings", while the Hebrew has, "Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise". Professor Toy and other scholars have considered "of the wise" to be a marginal gloss, an interpolation, [illegible], "my words", which is exactly the reading of the Egyptian. The Egyptian then has: "Give thy heart to interpret them". The Hebrew reads: "and apply thy heart to my knowledge", or "be understanding to". Erman points out that by the change of one letter the Hebrew text would read, "to understand them", thus making an exact translation of the Egyptian. The following phrase of the Hebrew, "For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them in thy breast, if [illegible], and

[1]Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, XV (1924), 86-93.

1. Toy, C.H. - A Critical and Exegetical Comm. on the Book of Proverbs, P. 122.

Egyptian.

The introduction - verses 17-21 - of this section in Proverbs, with the exception of verse 19, is in almost sexual verbal agreement with the Egyptian code, although the sentence order is not the same. Verse 19, which has no Egyptian parallel, has the words, "That the [illegible] may be [illegible]-weh", which of course one would not expect to find in the Egyptian.

We will now take a consideration of the Proverbs Conclusion. Prov. 22:22 reads: "Do not rob the poor, because he is poor; and do not oppress the weak in the gate". Quoting from Amenemopet (Chap. 2), "Keep thyself from robbing the poor, and from showing thyself strong against the weak". The verbal agreement here is not so close, but the Hebrew could well be a free rendering of the Egyptian. The phrase "in the gate", is so common in connection with "[illegible]" that it could easily have been added.

It is not strange that Prov. 22:23, which reads, "For Jahweh will plead their cause, and rob their [illegible] of life," has no Egyptian parallel.

The next verse in Proverbs reads: "Do not associate with a man given to anger, and do not go with a passionate man". The correspondence with the Egyptian is quite close (Chap. 9): "Do not associate with the passionate man, and do not [illegible] conversation with him". The main difference here is that the Hebrew uses two parallel words, "a man of anger", and "a man of passion", whereas the Egyptian used one and a pronoun.

For the next three verses of the Hebrew there are no

parallels in the papyrus, but Prov. 22:28, which reads, "Do not remove the ancient landmark which thy fathers made", and more especially 23:10, "Do not remove an ancient landmark, and do not enter the orphans' fields", find a parallel in Amenemopet (Chap. 6): "Do not remove a landmark from the boundary of a field..... Do not remove [illegible]; [illegible] the landmark of the widow". [illegible], one of the parallel lines, [illegible] "ancient" [illegible] "widow", reading, "Remove not the landmark of the widow", which agrees completely with the Egyptian.

Added to the final chapter of Amenemopet is a proverb which seems to be misplaced: "A scribe who is skilful in his office finds himself worthy to be a courtier". There is a parallel for this in the last verse of Proverbs 22: "Seest thou a man skilful in his business? He shall stand before kings".

Both Proverbs 23:1-3 and chapter 23 of Amenemopet deal with good manners at a prince's table, although the Egyptian text is doubtful in several places. It shows certain close parallels with the Hebrew. The following [illegible] verses of the Hebrew seem to be a shortened form of chapter 7 of Amenemopet. The Hebrew reads: "Toil not thyself to become rich; cease by reason of thine own understanding. Wilt thou set thy eyes upon it? It is gone. It surely maketh itself wings like an eagle and flieth toward heaven". The beginning of chapter 7 of Amenemopet reads: "Labor not thyself to seek for more"; the ending: "They (riches) have made themselves wings like geese, and have flown heavenward". The Hebrew,

very intelligently. Finally in a much mutilated form part of it was incorporated into the collection which makes up the third section of our book of Proverbs. One cannot help wondering why it is that although the original ending, referring to the thirty chapters, is now found in the introduction, and in spite of the fact that its significance seems to have been early lost, that there are still just thirty sections in the collection.

In this paragraph the references are not to wisdom literature, but if parallels can be found between other types of Egyptian and Hebrew literature, why should there not be more likelihood of there being parallels between the wisdom literatures? Some scholars have suspected a direct relationship between parts of Hebrew literature and the literature of the Egyptians for many years. There are such striking parallels between parts of the Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers" [1] and the story of Joseph in the house of Potiphar (Gen. 39:1-20) that many have been led to feel that the latter story was indebted to the Egyptian. In Professor Breasted's book, "History of the Ancient Egyptians", we find printed in parallel columns parts of Ihknaton's hymn in praise of Aton and Psalm 104, showing "a notable similarity both in the thought and the sequence".[2] But we have, in the Wisdom of Amenemopet, the first case of actual verbal agreement between an Egyptian and a Hebrew text, and the extent of the agree-

1. This tale to be found in Petrie's Egyptian Tales, second series. London, 1895. Extracts are given by Barton in his "Archaeology and the Bible", 1925, p 326ff.

2. P. 273ff.

ment makes it evident that a part of the Egyptian wisdom text found its way into the biblical book of Proverbs. This naturally raises the question: How much more of Hebrew literature may be traced to an Egyptian source? Perhaps the Egyptian sands are still concealing other documents as valuable as Amenemopet's for the study of the Old Testament literature and perhaps the old sphinx will not always be as silent as he looks.

Marion Hiller Dunsmore in an article[1] published in the Journal of Religion, May 1925, pages 300-308 says that the Wisdom of Amenemopet has several important points of interest for biblical study. They are listed as follows:[2]

1. It is the nearest approach to an original document entering into the writing of the Old Testament which has yet been discovered. We know from the writings themselves that the authors of some Old Testament books had older documents which they used as sources; e.g., The Book of Jashar (Josh. 10:13; II Sam. 1:18). The Book of the Wars of Yahweh (Num. 21:14ff), the sources from which "the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" the proverbs of Prov. 25ff. (Prov. 25:1), and many others. But all of these were early lost. In Amenemopet's book we seem to have found such a source document, and from the study of it we can gain some idea of how source materials were utilized, mutilated, and adapted by compilers, and in this case at least, without giving any credit to the original sources.

1. An Egyptian Contribution to the Book of Proverbs.
2. Ibid. pp. 307-308.

2. It furnishes clear evidence that at least one Egyptian text was taken over and adapted by the Hebrews, and suggests the possibility that similar treatment may have been accorded to others. We have noted above the similarity between certain other pieces of Egyptian and Hebrew literature.

3. It confirms the opinion that the text of Proverbs contains corruptions. Examples were noted where modern commentators had felt the text to be corrupt and so had made emendations which are now confirmed by the Egyptian document.

4. It shows that the Hebrew text already contained corruptions when the Greek translation was made, or that the meaning of the text was misunderstood by the translators; e.g., in Prov. 22:20 the Greek translators misunderstood or misread the word for thirty, translating it triply, or threefold; and in Prov. 22:21 they rendered the phrase, "him who sends thee forth", in which both the Hebrew and the Egyptian agree, by "him who questions thee".

5. It shows that modern commentators are sometimes wrong, but also sometimes right in their emendations of the text.

Almost forty years ago Professor Gunkel asserted that "the Hebrew production of Proverbs stands under the influence of Egypt, and this all the more so since in the Hebrew Wisdom writing the distinctly Israelite element remains in the background".[1] Gunkel's judgment was quite sound as has been proven by the recent publication of the teachings of Amenophis (Amen-em-ope). In Prov. 22:17-24:22 and its appendix, 24: 23-34, we have a collection called "the sayings of the sages", and so close is the likeness between these sayings and those of Amenophis that he must have been one of the sages referred

1. Quoted by Kelmer, A.J.S.L., XL III, 19, note 1.

to. Indeed, so clear is the dependence of the Hebrew text upon that of Amenophis that the former can frequently be corrected by the latter, and in almost every instance the emendation suggested as far back as 1899 by Toy in his commentary on Proverbs is confirmed in most remarkable fashion. A word, however, that Toy, as well as all others from the time of the Greek translation down to the present, was unable to interpret is shalishôm or shalishim, in Prov. 22:20. It has been variously rendered; "threefold","in former times", "excellent things", etc., but we now know that the word was taken directly from the Egyptian and is a corruption of the word shesholim, "thirty". In Amenophis it refers to the thirty chapters of his work, but it seems to have no significance in Hebrew.

Some of the parallels between the two writings are:

Prov. 22:17. Incline your ear and hear my words, and apply your mind to understand them;

18a. For it is lovely if you treasure them within you.

Amen. I. 3,9. Give your ear, hear what is said,

10. Set your mind to interpret it;

11. It is well if you set it in your heart.

Prov. 22:24. Do not associate with a man given to anger, nor consort with a man of violent temper.

Amen. IX. 11,13. Do not associate with a man of violent temper,

14. Nor consort with him for conversation.

Proverbs 23:6. Eat not the bread of the evil-minded, Nor covet his dainties.

8. If you have eaten your bite, you must vomit it up, And so lose your good things.

Amen. XI. 14,5. Covet not the property of a dependent,

6. Nor hunger for his bread.

17. If you have swallowed a large mouthful of bread,
you must vomit it up,

18. And so are emptied of your good.

T. James Meek says that "the author of Proverbs shows his dependence upon Amenophis as much by what he omits and adapts as by what he copies. As Sellin, Gressmann, Grimme, and others have shown, he was not making a literal translation but was editing the Proverbs of the Egyptian sage for Jewish consumption, and so felt no compunction in changing them in places. He completely eliminates the references to the Egyptian cultus and gods and other things not in harmony with Jewish ideas".[1]

Besides the parallels in Prov. 22:17-24:34 with Egyptian writings, elsewhere in Proverbs and in other parts of the Old Testament there are clear evidences of Egyptian influence, but nowhere else is there such direct borrowing. Practically all scholars now identify the behemoth and Leviathan of Job 40f. with the hippopotamus and the crocodile, respectively, both of which are pre-eminently the animals that are really native to Palestine, described in chapter 38f.

Blackman has well remarked, "it can almost be said that the songs of Zion were being sung in a strange land (Egypt) before they were sung in Zion herself;" (p. 197) but that applies more to the thought and content than to the actual words. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the Hebrews were not slavish imitators, but students of the world in the true sense of that

1. T. James Meek, p. 248.

word. They borrowed; but what they borrowed they made their own, enlarged and enhanced it.

Besides the information concerning the relationship of the Teaching of Amenemope to Proverbs furnished us by Marion Dunsmore and T. J. Meek we have interesting and reliable data concerning the same subject contributed by W. O. E. Oesterley in the Zeitschnift für die alttestamentiche Wissenschaft, 1927, pages 9-24. Also, by H. Gressman in the same Journal for 1924, pages 272-296. Since there is more or less ~~of~~ repetition in these articles, we shall glean from that of Oesterley's, what is new.

The unique character of the Egyptian book centers in the religious and ethical standpoint of Amenemope.

For illustration we quote the following from Oesterley's article:[1]

Good Christian Science

"God alone is perfect, and in His sight nothing that is imperfect can subsist (XVIII. 19, 22ff.). He is the Creator of man, and determines the lot of man; some men He exalts, others He brings low; life and death are in His hands; and all things are according to His will (VII. 10, 12-15; XXV. 24, 13-18). Man proposes, but God disposes; the future is in His sight and He alone knows what the morrow will bring forth; God, the 'universal Lord', is the Pilot of the ship (XVIII. 19,14-17; 20,3ff.). It is very interesting to observe, too, how Amen-em-ope insists on the divine attribute of righteousness, or justice. God is the possessor of justice which He imparts to whom He will: 'Die Gerechtigkeit ist die Gabe Gottes, und er gibt sie, wem er will' (XX. 21. 5, 6).

1. Pages 10-11.

As a righteous God sin in any and every form is an abomination to Him, and the evil deeds of men cannot escape His allseeing eye (XV. 17. 10-12; XVII. 18. 23, 19ff.). In His sight there is no man without sin, and it is useless to attempt to conceal sin from Him, for 'sie (die Sunde) ist mit seinem Finger besiegelt', i.e., with Him lies the decision as to what is or is not sin, and He will punish it (XVIII. 19. 20, 21). Hypocrisy and lying are an abomination to God; and, above all, one who is double-tongued is hateful to Him (X. 14. 2, 3). To interfere with the course of justice is to frustrate the divine plans (XX. 21. 13, 14); false oaths are sinful (XI. 14. 9, 10); dishonesty of every kind is detestable to God (see chaps. XIII. XVII. XX. passim). He punishes the passionate man (III. 5. 14-17). The possessions of a man are valueless if he sins against God (XVI. 18. 10, 11); let a man beware of neglecting the guidance of God (XXIV. 24. 4, 5); the evil-doer will receive punishment)chaps. II, III, VI, Passim); it is well to have a good conscience (XVIII. 19. 11, 12).

"Again, Amen-em-ope is insistent on those things which are well-pleasing in the sight of God; just dealing (VI. 8, 19, 20), poverty with godliness (VI. 9. 5,6); kindness to the meek (XXVIII. 26. 13, 14); a spirit of humility (XVIII. 19, 22-20, 2; XX. 21.5); self-control in speech, and straightforwardness (II. 5.7, 8; X. 13. 17).

"But the passages are more numerous in which virtues are commended and warnings against immoral action are uttered; for the whole religious outlook of Amen-em-ope shows that, without specifically saying so, he regards the former as well-pleasing to God, the latter as abhorrent to Him. Thus, truthfulness is commended (XIX. 20. 14); consideration in taxing the poor is enjoined, i.e.

mercy (XIII. 16. 5-7); the need of honesty of purpose in a scribe is insisted upon (XV. 17. 11-14); the judge is called upon to deal justly (XX. 20, 21, 22; 21. 17). Warnings are uttered against covetousness (XI. 14. 5, 6; XII. 15. 9, 10), against bearing false witness (XIII. 16. 1), against stealing (XII. 15, 13), against consorting with evil men (XII. 15. 14: XVI. 18. 6, 7), against bribery (XVII. 19. 4), against dishonesty (XVI. 17, 18, 19), and against hypocrisy (X. 13. 13-16). The religious spirit which permeates his writing shows that in all these things the thought of God is at the back of Amen-em-ope's mind".

In Amemope we find the utterance, "Commit thyself into the arms of God" occurring three times, showing that the attribute of loving-kindness belongs to his conception of God. He also has a strongly marked tendency towards a monotheistic conception of God.

His teaching on man's duty to his neighbor is in its way just as remarkable as his conception of God.

"His thoughts and teaching about God, and his precepts on men's behaviour to one another are confessedly unique in Egyptian Wisdom literature. They are to be paralleled in their fulness elsewhere only in the Hebrew scriptures".[1]

Besides the parallels already noted a few additional ones may be mentioned, in which the thoughts are identical, though the mode of expression differs:

A. III. 5, 13, 14: Sleep before speaking,

Lest the tempest arise as a flame in the straw.

This same thought occurs in at least two passages in Proverbs:

Prov. XIII. 3: He that guardeth his mouth preserveth his life,

(But) he that openeth wide his lips, - it is destruction to him.

Prov. XXI. 23: He that guardeth his mouth and his tongue,

Guardeth himself from troubles.

Again:

A. XXI. 22:13, 14: Let not th words be spread abroad among others and have thou nothing to do with the chatterbox.

Prov. XX. 19: He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets (compare Xi. 13a), And have thou nothing to do with him that openeth wide his lips (cp. XIII. 3b).

Gressmann has drawn attention to the parallelism between A. XXIII. 23: 13-18 and Prov. XXIII. We note that Jes. Sir. XXXI (XXXIV) 12-16 offers a still closer one:

> My son, if thou sittest at the table of a great one,
> Open not thy mouth (lit. throat) upon it.
> Say not, "There is plenty upon it".
> Remember that an envious (lit. evil) eye is an evil thing,
> Stretch not out thine hand at that at which he (i.e. thy neighbor) looketh;
> And reach not thine hand with his into the dish;
> Eat like a man that which is set before thee.
> And eat not greedily lest thou be despised.

We ask ourselves the question at what time, or times, in the history of Israel and Egypt could they have been influenced by each other? The earliest period might have been during the reign of Solomon - an indirect influence through the Phoenicians, or direct, through the friendly relations between the two royal houses. To quote from Blackman: "At the end of the Twentieth Dynasty (1100 B.C.) Byblos still maintained close trade and cultural

1. Ibid. p. 11.

relations with Egypt, as can be seen from the adventure of Unamum".[1] The Egyptian hymns composed during the XVIII Dynasty could have been adapted by the native Phoenician singers. The Hebrews could have received them from the Phoenicians either during the reign of Solomon, when Hiram's workmen built for him the temple of Jahweh at Jerusalem - a building distinctly Egyptian in its plan and in its sacrificial accessories - or during the reign of Ahab, whose Phoenician wife Jezabel encouraged the introduction of Phoenician religious and political ideas. An indirect Egyptian influence may have come through those who accompanied the Pharaoh's daughter when she came to Jerusalem to be Solomon's wife (I Kings 3:1).

The possibility of the above happening? Yes. The probability? No. Why not probable? Because at this period the Israelites did not have anything that could be called literature, and would hardly be influenced by Egyptian religious or literary thought. The Egyptians in both lines were so very much more advanced that we would not expect any Hebrew influence on them at this early date. But later when the teachings of the prophets were exerting their influence we may suppose that Egypt came in for her share. Due to the close relationship of the religious thought and ethical teaching of Amen-em-ope to that of various Old Testament books, we conclude that the religion of Israel had its influence upon Egypt. Wallis Budge says: "It a pears to me certain that Amen-em-ope's high moral and religious ideals were inspired by an influence that was not of African but of Asiatic origin".[2]

See Erman, Die Literatur der Agypter, p. 225ff.

2. Ibid. p. 23.

I Kings 4:30 and Isa. 19:11ff. show that the wisdom of the Egyptians was well-known among the Israelites and was looked upon with high respect in Israel.

Oesterley's conclusion concerning the relationship between the Teaching of Amen-em-ôpe and the Book of Proverbs is that the writers of each were partially indebted to the common stock of "wisdom" material which existed in abundance in the East, But, regarding the collection of Prov. XXII. 17-XXIII. 14, both A. and the compilers of Proverbs made use of an older Hebrew collection.[1] When it comes to the question of religion and ethics he thinks that the Egyptian writer was more likely to have been influenced by the Hebrew genius than that Israelite religious leaders should have borrowed from Egypt. Perhaps he assumes this attitude because there has been a tendency at times to overstate Egyptian influence on Israel.

However, he accepts the following words of Blackman: "Just as, on the one hand, specially native Egyptian contributions to the world's cultural and religious progress penetrated into Palestine and were absorbed into the main stream of Hebrew religious development, so, on the other hand, certain results of the Semitic genius for religion in their turn penetrated into Egypt and contributed to the formulation of what was highest and best in Egyptian religion".[2]

1. Ibid. p. 23.

2. Simpson, "The Psalmists", Intoduction p. xiii.

Chapter VI.

POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN HEBREW AND BABYLONIAN WISDOM LITERATURE

CHAPTER VI.

POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN HEBREW AND BABYLONIAN RELIG-
ION LITERATURE.

I. Babylonian Job.

The problem of human suffering holds a prominent place in the philosophy and literature of every great civilization. Babylonian and Hebrew literature presents the problem in the form of a legend of The Righteous Sufferer. In the Hebrew story this righteous sufferer's name was Job; in the Babylonian, it was Tabi-utul-Enlil. Jastrow says that the parallel between the Hebrew and the Babylonian legend and between the philosophical treatment of the subject in [illegible] of each work is not very close.[1]

The first lines of Tablet I are lacking, [illegible] concerning the historical circumstances of the [illegible] of this poem, corresponding to the Prologue of the Hebrew "Book of Job". There is a description of the hero's falling upon unmerited trials and persecutions at the hands of [illegible]. The sufferer, who is depicted not as a king, but simply as influential resident of the ancient city of Nippur, describes his woes. He had been visited by friends who like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, of the Hebrew story, came to comfort him. (After the description of his affliction in Tablet II, [illegible] been introduced [illegible] appeared [illegible]).

Tabi-utul-Enlil [illegible] (Tablet II). [illegible]

[illegible]

II. A Babylonian Parallel to Ecclesiastes.

A few verses taken from a tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic, written in the script of the time of Hammurapi, about 2000 B.C. is strikingly like Ecclesiastes 9:6-9, not only in sentiment, but in part closely approaches its language.

"Why, O Gilgamesh, dost thou wander about?
The life that thou seekest, thou wilt not find."[1]

"Since the gods created man,
Death they ordained for man,
Life in their hands they hold.
Thou, O Gilgamesh, fill indeed thy belly,
Day and night be thou joyful,

"Daily ordain gladness,
Day and night rage and make merry,
Let thy garments be bright,
Thy head purify, wash with water,
Desire thy chikdren which thy hand possesses,
A wife enjoy in thy bosom,
Peaceably thy work (?)..."

As Hubert Grimme pointed out (Orientalische Literatur Zeitung, Vol. VIII, col 432ff.), this is a most striking parallel to Eccl. 9:6-9, which follows:
"Also their (the dead's) love as well as their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they have again no portion in all that is done under the sun. Come eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a glad heart, for already God hath accepted thy works. At all times let thy garments be white, and let not oil be lacking on thy head. Enjoy life with a woman whom thou lovest all the days of thy vain life which he gives thee under the sun, for it is thy lot in life and thy toil which thou toilest under the sun."

These passages are not only strikingly similar, but in parts the Hebrew seems to be a translation of the Babylonian. The existence of the influential Jewish colony called the "Goulioth" in Babylonia and its great influence on the Jews

1. Bewer, "The Literature of the Old Testament", p. 335.
2. Barton, "Archaeology and the Bible", p. 472.

Translated from the Mitteilungen der vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft, 1902, Heft, p. 8, col.iii, l. 3. Meissner.

of Palestine is well known. There can be little doubt that it was through this channel that this Babylonian philosophy of life became known to Qoheleth and influenced him.

"This old Babylonian philosophy, too, it should be noted, contains the heart of all that has been considered Epicurean in Qoheleth. The eating and drinking, the enjoyment of one's labor, the cheerfulness, the delight in pleasure, the feeling that death ends all - all these are contained in it. The script in which it is written attests the existence of these sentiments as early as 2000 B.C., at a time when there was no reason to doubt that they are a product of purely Semitic thought. Qoheleth was, in all probability acquainted with the Babylonian poem. It is not likely that his whole point of view came from Babylonia, but he adopted the sentiment of the poem because it expressed a point of view which he had himself reached, while his own thought was made possible by some phases of Jewish thought in the particular period when he lived. Semitic thought in Babylonia had, almost two millenia before Qoheleth, traversed the cycle which Jewish thought was in his person treading".[1]

III. Another Babylonian parallel to Ecclesiastes.

In Hebrew literature the Book of Ecclesiastes offers a close parallel to the Babylonian Dialogue of Pessimism, but the Hebrew poet is not so consistently gloomy. The theme of the Babylonian dialogue is one of complete pessimism and despair. The illustrations employed by the Babylonian poet to

1. Barton, "Int. Critical Commentary, "Ecclesiastes," p. 42.

unfold his argument are often very similar to those of Ecclesiastes. It may no longer be doubted that the cycle of Babylonian wisdom literature to which the dialogue belongs influenced Hebrew thought in Post-exilic times and especially the author of Ecclesiastes.

The following lines contain the most powerful and extreme expression of pessimism in Babylonian literature:

37. Who is long enough to ascend unto heaven? *
38. Who is vast enough to complete the earth?
39. "Nay, Oh servant, I will slay thee and cause thee to go before me".

The poet here comes to the logical conclusion of his sceptisism. Life is a troublesome gift of the gods and death is the only happiness attainable by man. He is powerless to control the course of nature. The Babylonian poet anticipated the Hebrew sceptics in this conclusion, as he undoubtedly wrote before the authors of the Hebrew Books of Job and Ecclesiastes. Job 3:20-22 reads:

> Why doth he give light to him that is in travail?
> And light unto the bitter in soul;
> Who long for death, but it cometh not;
> And search for it more than for hid treasures;
> Who are glad unto exultation,
> And rejoice when they find the grave?

This passage reflects the wish of a man who had fallen upon great trouble. It does not mean that death is desirable in the abstract as a comment upon life in general. The author

* Langdon, "Babylonian Wisdom", p. 79-80.

of the Hebrew Ecclesiastes does make the same abstract criticism of life in general. "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth", (Eccl. 7:1). But the Hebrew writer is not consistent like the Babylonian poet. For him, life in general is vanity and despair but it is better than death and the house of eternal darkness; "For him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccl. 9:4).

The good and the bad among the ancients lie beneath the ruins of their cities and their deeds are forgotten. For them the present generation retains no sentiment of honor or dishonor. They are now all alike in the land of no return.

30. Ascend thou unto the ruins of cities, bo to those of old;
31. Behold the skulls of the later and the former ones,
32. Who is now an evil doer, who is now a benefactor?

Of similar thought are Ecclesiastes:

1:11. There is no remembrance of the former generations; Neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter Generations that are to come, among those that shall come after.

2:14. The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happeneth to them all.

2:16. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. And how doth the wise man die even as the fool!

The argument in this section is similar to that of Ecclesiastes 9:2:

All things come alike to all:
There is one hope for the righteous and the wicked,
for the good so with the sinner; he that sweareth vainly
is as he that feareth the oath".

I consider it of interest to include in our Babylonian Wisdom Literature comparison chapter some examples with an English translation. The following is a:

FRAGMENT OF WISDOM LITERATURE, THE SO-CALLED BABYLONIAN JOB, SECOND TABLET OF THE WISDOM OF ṬABI-UTUL-ELLIL

I attained unto (long) life, I moved beyond the appointed time,
Wherever I turn, there is evil, evil -
Oppression is increased, righteousness I see not.
I have cried unto my god, but he showed me not his face.

akšud-ma a-na ba-laṭ a-dan-na i-te-iḳ
a-saḫ-ḫur-ma li-mun li-mun-ma
ṣa-bur-ti u-ta-ṣa-pa i-šar-ti ul ut-tu
ili al-si-ma ul id-di-na pa-ni-šu

I invoked my goddess, but she lifted not up her head.
The Enchanter did not fix through his oracle the future.
The seer, at the libation, did not establish my right.
I turned to the necromancer, but he opened not my ear.
The magician by his sorceries did not loosen my ban.

u-sal-li (ilu) Iš-tar-ri ul i-šaḳ-ḳa-a ri-ši-ša
(amêlu) bârû ina bi-ir-ri ar-kat ul ip-ru-us
ina ma-aš-šak-ka u (amêlu) ša-'-ilu ul u-šap-pi di-i-ni
za-ki-ḳu a-pul-ma ul u-pat-ti uz-ni
(amêlu) mašmašu ina ki-kit-ṭi-e ki-mil-ti ul ip-ṭur

How different are the issues in the world!

If I look behind me — trouble pursues me)?,
As if the sacrifice — I had not brought my god.
As if at mealtime — I had not called upon my goddess,
Had not inclined my face — and my adoration had not [illegible],

a-a-i-te ip-še-e-ti ša-na-a-ti ma-ti-tan
a-nur-ma ar-kat ri-ba-ti ip-pi-ru
ki-i ša tam-ḳi-tum a-na ili la uk-tin-nu
u ina ma-ka-li-e (ilu) Iš-tar-ri la zak-ru
ap-pi la e-nu-u šu-kin-ni la am-ru

15 Like one in whose mouth — prayers and tears were stopped,
For whom god's day has ceased, — the new moon's feast is diminished,
Who has lain down on his side — and has despised their images,
Who has not taught his people — god's fear and veneration,
Who called not upon his god — when he ate of his food,

ini pi-i-šu ip-par-ku-u su-up-pi-e tas-li-ti
ib-ṭi-lu û-mu ili i-maṭ-ṭu eš-še-ši
id-du-u aḫ-šu ṣal-mi-šu-nu i-mi-šu
pa-la-ḫu u it-'-u-ru la u-šal-mi-du niše-šu
ili-šu la iz-kur-e-kul a-kal-šu

20 Who abandoned his goddess — and brought her not what was written (!)
He who forgot his lord, — who was to be honored (.)
Who pronounced lightly — the mighty name of his god - I was like him.
But I myself took thought only — for prayers and supplication.
Prayer was my rule, — sacrifice my order,

i-zib (ilu) Iš-tar-ta-šu maš-ṭar la ub-la
a-na ša im-ḫu-u bêli-šu im-šu-u
niš ili-šu kab-ti ḳal-liš iz-kur a-na-ku am-šal

aḫ-su-us-ma ra-man su-up-pu-u tas-li-ti
tas-li-ti ta-ši-mat ni-ḳu-u šak-ku-u-a

The day of god's honoring — was my heart's joy,
The day of following after — was for me gain and riches,
the goddess
The prayer of the king, — that was my joy,
And his song, — that was pleasant unto me.
I taught my land — to keep god's name.

ûmu pa-la-aḫ ilâni ṭu-ub lib-bi-ia
ûmu ri-du-ti (ilu) Iš-tar ni-me-li ta-at-tur-ru
ik-ri-bi- šarri ši-i ḫi-du-ti
u ni-gu-ta-šu a-na da-me-iḳ-ti šum-ma
u-šer a-na mâti-ia mê ili na-ṣu-ri

To honor the name of the goddess — I cautioned my people.
The respect of the king — I made of highest power,
In reverence of the palace — I instructed the people.
For I knew that before the god — such deeds are in good favor.
That which seemeth good to — that is evil with god,
itself,

šu-mi (ilu) Iš-tar šu-ḳur nišê-ia uš-ta-ḫi-iz
ta-na-da-a-ti šarri e-liš u-maš-šil
u pu-luḫ-tu ekalli um-man u-šal-mid
lu-ni-di ki-i it-ti ili i-ta-an-gur an-na-a-ti
ša dam-ḳat ra-ma-nu-uš [a]-na ili ḳul-lul-tum

And that which in its heart — that is good with god,
is rejected,
Who can understand the counsel — in heaven?
o the gods
The plan of the gods full — who shall establish it?

of darkness,

How shall pale-faced men the way of the gods!

understand

He who lives in the evening is in the morning dead,

šá ina lib-bi-šu mu-us-[su]-kat eli ili-šu dam-ṭat

a-a-u ṭe-im ilâni ki-rib šamê-e i-lam-mad

mi-lik šá ili za-nun zi-e i-ba-ak-kim man-nu

e-ka-a-ma il-ma-da a-lak-ti ili a-pa-a-ti

šá ina am-šat ib-lu-ṭu i-mut ud-di-eš

Quickly is he in trouble, suddenly is he smitten;

In a moment he is singing and playing,

In an instant he is howling like a complainer.

Every moment so are their thoughts changed,

Now they are hungry, and are like a corpse,

sur-riš uš-ta-bir za-mar ib-ta-maš

ina ṣi-bit ap-pi i-za-ag-mur e-li-la

ina pi-it pu-ri-di u-zar-rab lal-la-ri-eš

ki-i pi-te-e u ka-ta-mi ṭe-en-ši-na šit-ni

im-mu-ša-ma im-ma-a ša-lam-taš

Again they are full, and are like unto rot.

If it go well with them, they speak of climbing up to heaven;

If they be in trouble, they talk of going down to Sheol.

i-šib-ba-a-ma i-ša-an-na-na ili-šun

ina ṭa-a-bi i-ta-ma-a i-li ša-a-'-a

u-taš-ša-sa-ma i-dib-bu-ha a-rad ir-kal-la [broken]

[At this point there is wanting a considerable passage].

Reverse:

My house is become a prison for me.
In the chains of my flesh are my arms bent,
In my own bonds (?) are my feet cast
a-na ki-sik-ki-ia i-tur-ru bi-e-tu
il-lu-ur-tum ši-ri-ia na-du-a i-da-a-a
maš-kan ra-ni-ia uk-ku-tu še-pa-a-a
ni-da-tu .....
With a whip he has beaten me not.....
With a staff he has pierced me, the point was strong.
All day long doth follow the avenger,
In the middle of the night breathe for a moment.
he lets me not
Through tearings my joints are sundered,
ki-na-zi id-da-an-ni-ma la-a zil-la-a-tun
pa-ru-uš-šu- u-sah-bi-il-an-ni zi-ka-ta dan-nat
kâl û-mu ri-du-u i-ri-id-da[n-ni]
ina šat mûsi ul u-nap-pa-šu-an-ni sur-riš
ina i-tab-lak-ku-ti pu-ut-tu-ru rik-su-u-a
My limbs are unbone, are.....
Upon my couch I passed the night like a bull,
I was covered with my like a sheep.
excrement
My symptoms of fever were not clear (?) to the magicians,
And my omens did the diviner leave dark.
meš-ri-tu-u-a su-up-pu-ha i-ta-at-ta-a a-bi-tum
ina ru-ub-bi-ia e-bit ki-i al-pi
ub-tal-lil ki-i immeri ina ta-ba-aš-ta-ni-ia
sa-kik-ki-ia iš-bu-tu (amêlu) mašmašu
u te-ri-ti-ia (amêlu) bârû u-tas-si

15 The sorcerer did not handle well my illness.
And the necromancer could of my malady.
not make an end
The god helped me not, he took me not by the hand,
The goddess did not pity me, she came not to my side.
The tomb hath opened, they seized my habitation (?)

ul u-š̌a-pi a-š̌i-pu š̌i-kin mur-ṣi-ia
u a-dan-na si-li-'-ti-ia (amêlu) bâpû ul id-din
ul i-ru-ṣa ilu ḳa-ti ul iṣ-bat
ul i-ri-man-ni (ilu) Iš̌-ta-ri i-da-a-a ul il-lik
pi-ti kimaḫḫu ir-š̌u-ᵘ̯š̌u-ka-nu-u-a

20 Before I was dead, the death wail was finished.
My whole land cried out, "How is he destroyed!"
When mine enemy heard, his face glowed,
As friendly news they brought his heart was brightened,
it to him,
But I knew the time, of all my family,

a-di la mi-tu-ti-i-ma bi-ki-ti gam-rat
kal ma-ti-ia ki-i ḫa-bil iḳ-bu-ni
iš̌-me-e-ma ḫa-du-u-a im-me-ru pa-ni-š̌u
ḫa-di-ti u-ba-as-si-ru ka-bat-ta-š̌u ip-pir-du
i-di û-mu š̌a gi-mir kin-ti-ia

25 When among the guardian angels their divinity had mercy.
š̌a ki-rib š̌e-di-e ilu-ut-su-un i-rîm

Copied from Rogers, Robert William ... CUNEIFORM PARALLELS to the OLD TESTAMENT.

Eaton and Mains, New York; Jennings and Graham, Cincinnati; 1912

Pages 164 to 169.

Here is another FRAGMENT OF WISDOM LITERATURE.

Obverse:

5. ..... their freedom (?) shalt thou not take away,
Thou shalt not tyrannically oppress them.
With one, who thus acts, his god is angry,
He is not pleasing to Shamash, he will requite him with evil.

Give food to eat, give wine to drink,
10 Seek the truth, provide for god.....
With him, who thus acts his god is pleased,
He is pleasing to Shamash, he will requite him with good.

Bring help, protect (the weak)
A maid in the house, thou shalt not.....
15 ..... he shall not rule.....
.....thy body thou shalt not.....
.....thy..... thou shalt not.....
In the mouth of the people thy reputation (?) thou shalt
be wholesome.
The house of an handmaid be lord over (?) ....(?)
20 Thou shalt not take an harlot whose husbands are multi-
tudinous (?)
A prostitute who has been consecrated to god,
An outcast whose speech is abundant,
In thine adversity will not lift thee up.
In thy conflicts she will ridicule thee.
25 Fear of god and humility are not with her.
If she come to (thy) house remove her threshold,
Upon the track of a foe let her attention be turned.

Obverse: (original)

Obverse: (original)

ṣur-ru [....] na ši-ṭu-uz-zu-nu e tal-ṭut (?)
šal-ṭi-iš e-li-šu-nu a tak-ta-ni-iš (?)
a-na an-nim-ma ilu-šu e-zi-iz-zu
ul ṭa-a-bi eli (ilu) šamaš i-ra-ab-šu lim-[illegible]

šu-kil a-ka-lu ši-ki ku-ru-un (?)-nu
e-riš hit-tu e-pi-ir ù [.....
a-na an-nim-ma ilu-šu ḫa-di-šu
ṭa-a-bi eli (ilu) šamaš i-ra-ab-šu lu-[.....

šum-šu u-sa-ta mi-nil lu-[.....]
artu a-na bîti e tu-[.....]
.... ša tir-ma la i-be-el [illegible]
.... ši ra (?)-a-ti na-mar-ka lu te-eš-ši ....
.... ru te..... la la tu-ur-ra.....
ina pi-i ḫisê..... ta-ra ki (?)-e-an taš-li[illegible]
bît an ti-ma be-el i-sap-pu-uḫ
e ta-ḫu-uz ḫa-rim-ta ša ša-a-ri [illegible]-tu-ša
iš-ta-ri-tu ša a-na ili zak-r[at]
[illegible]-ma-ši-tu ša [illegible]-ti-šu ma-'-[da-at]
ina ša-ru-uš-tō-ka-ma ul i-na-aš-ši-ka
ina ṣal-ti-ka-ma e-li-ka ša-an-ṣa-at
pa-la-ḫu u [illegible]-ša el [illegible]-ši [illegible]-ti-š[illegible]
lu-u bîta [ta]-[illegible]-u (?) [illegible]-ru-ši ina [illegible]
a-na [illegible]-i a-ḫi-e u-zu-un-ša [illegible]-rat

Reverse:

Thou shalt not slander, (but) speak kindly;
Thou shalt not utter evil, but speak good.
He who slanders and speaks evil,
At a [illegible] Shamash will wait for his (lit. [illegible]).

Open not wide thy mouth but guard thy lips;
The words of thy thought speak not aloud.
If thou speakest quickly thou shalt take it back,
And in silence must suffer thy mind.
Daily present to thy god
Sacrifice and prayer, appropriate to incense.
Before thy god mayest thou have a pure heart.
This is appropriate to the deity.

Prayer, petition, and prostration
Every morning shalt thou render him, then will he give
thee gifts
And with god's help thou shalt be abundantly prosperous.
In thy wisdom learn from the tablet.
The fear (of god) begetteth favor,
Offering enriches life,
And prayer brings forgiveness of sin.
He who fears the gods will not cry ([illegible])
He who fears the Anunnaki will lengthen [his days]
With friend and companion thou shalt not speak [evil]
Thou shalt not speak [illegible], but good [illegible]
If thou hast promised aught, give [it to him]
If thou hast encouraged (him), [illegible]
as [illegible]]
[The lines following are too badly broken to be intelligible.]

Reverse:

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] [.....]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] [.....]
[illegible] [.....]
[illegible] [.....] [.....]
[illegible] [......]
[illegible] [......]
[illegible] [.....]

pp 175-178

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

In this survey of the influence of Egyptian and Babylonian Wisdom literatures upon the Hebrew Wisdom literature I have tried to select the outstanding types of wisdom literature belonging to each of these peoples, briefly discuss the subject matter and describe the character of each production.

From the Old Testament I have chosen Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Proverbs as the important types of Hebrew Wisdom literature; from the Apocrypha, I have chosen Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon.

The following are thw works belonging to the class of Egyptian Wisdom literature: The Precepts of Ptah-hotep, The Instruction of Ke' Gemni, of Duauf, of King Amenemhet, for King Merikere, of Sehetepibre, The Wisdom of Anii, and the Teaching of Amen-em-ope.

The representative works of the Babylonian Wisdom literature are as follows: The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, The Babylonian Dialogue of Pessimism, The Bilingual Book of Proverbs, The Babylonian Book of Proverbs, The Supposed Rules Monthly Diet, and the Gilgamesh Epic.

From a careful reading and study of whatever material I could find concerning the above mentioned works of wisdom literature I have characterized the nature of this literature in the case of each of these three peoples. I find that all have a deeply religious nature, and that they devote a great deal of time presenting principles of morality of a high order. Each furnishes a work showing the pessimistic and skeptical attitude prevalent among some of the people of each of the three countries.

I have endeavored to show that from the interpenetration of cultures nations have been able to leave a much fuller and richer heritage to future generations, that through the right kind of assimilation of foreign influences nations have been made more worth while contributions to covilization.

In the case of Egyptian influence upon Hebrew Wisdom literature, I have discussed at length the probability that the Hebrew Book of Proverbs is especially indebted to the Egyptian production, the "Teaching of Amen-em-ope".

In the case of Babylonian influence upon Hebrew Wisdom literature I have shown the probability that the Babylonians had a Job in the person of the Righteous Sufferer, and that this work has exerted its share of influence upon the Hebrew Job.

Dr. Gressmann, one of the leading authorities on the Old Testament, admits the influence of Egypt on Hebrew thought. Verses may have been derived from Egyptian prototypes, and here have come into the Hebrew writings through the medium of Phoenicia.

Professor Erman has proved that
Blackman says that most of the verses of the Book of Proverbs are almost literal translations of portions of an Egyptian work, the Proverbs of Amen-em-ope, composed about 1000 B.C.[1]

On the other hand, Wallis Budge says, "It appears to me certain that Amen-em-ope's high moral and religious ideals were inspired by an influence that was not of African, but of Asiatic origin".[2]

1. Simpson, The Psalmists, pp. 192-193.
2. Quoted from Oesterleyss article in Z.A.W., p. 19.

After much reading, study, and comparison of the "Teaching of Amen-em-ope" and of the Hebrew Book of Proverbs I have come to the following conclusions: that the Hebrew author came by his material through a common stock of material that was Sumerian in origin; that there is a possibility of his having had access to the Egyptian Proverbs; that he may have received some of them indirectly through other countries, especially Phoenicia; and last of all, making due allowance for the common instincts of mankind, he could have written some of these same proverbs without it ever being necessary to have any models.

In regard to the Babylonian influence. During the captivity the Jews were directly exposed to Babylonian influence. It was only natural for the more learned among the Hebrew scribes and priests to interest themselves in the ancient literature of their new home. If there had been any previous familiarity with the literature of Babylonia an increased interest would result from the actual residence in the country. It has been suggested that there are three pre-exilic periods at which the Hebrews or the ancestors of the race may have acquired a knowledge of Babylonian traditions. King says, "The earliest of these is the age of the patriarchs, the traditional ancestors of the Hebrew nation. The second period is that of the settlement in Canaan, which we may put from 1200 B.C. to the establishment of David's kingdom at about 1000 B.C. The third period is that of the late Judean monarchy, from 734 to 586 B.C., the date of the fall of Jerusalem; and in this last period there are two reigns of special importance in this connexion, those of Ahaz (734-720 B.C.) and Manasseh

(693-638 B.C.)".[1]

Langdon says, "the most striking is the parallelism that exists between Babylonian and Hebrew laws on family life. If we had no other proof for the Babylonian origin of the Hebrew and for the continued influence of Babylon upon them, this parallelism of family life would be sufficient".[2]

The Hebrews, according to their own traditions, once lived in Babylonia, and with their settlement in Palestine there came Babylonian influence through the medium of the Canaanite Amorites.

"That the Babylonian culture was one stream that helped to make up Hebrew culture is evident from the very first pages of the Old Testament. The early stories of Genesis are all set in Babylonia, and this would be most unlikely if the stories were native to the Hebrews".[3] The Hebrew story of the flood has so many points of contact with the Babylonian story that the former can scarcely be anything other than a Hebrew edition of the latter.

The Babylonians did not have the same capacity for religious development that the Hebrews did; so it makes it very unlikely that the Hebrews, who were spiritually far more advanced that the Babylonians, should have borrowed this kind of writing from their less gifted neighbors. The religious literature of the Babylonians lacked that tremendous emphasis on ethics

1. King, Legends of Babylon and Egypt. p. 136.
2. Langdon, Lectures on Babylonia and Palestine, p. 75.
3. Meek, Journal of religion, Vol. VII, p. 256.

which is one of the outstanding features of Hebrew monotheism.

If there was not direct Babylonian influence it is quite possible to have indirect influence from Babylon, which may have come about in several ways. The Hebrews themselves record in their own history the sojourning of their ancestors in Mesopotamia (Gen. 11;28-31; Joshua 24:2). The Amorites, who gave Babylon her first dynasty, and who with other Semitic races at various times acted as middlemen between the East, and the West must have helped in the diffusion of Babylonian mythology. The Babylonians, who overran Syria and Palestine may have left behind them legends and stories which would have been passed down through the Canaanites and other native races to the later Hebrew immigrants. Some Babylonian myths were circulated in Egypt in the fifteenth century B.C., and these must have found their way also into Palestine. Legends, therefore, which were not of native Semitic origin but of Sumerian or other origin, could have reached the Hebrews this way at an early period, and need not have been borrowed directly from Babylon in historical times.

Concerning my own conclusions regarding the Babylonian influence, I believe if there had not been a deep and permanent impress made upon the Hebrews during their "Babylonian" period, the creation myth would not have survived. Therefore, it is most reasonable to assume that the agreement between Hebrew and Babylonian traditions regarding the creation of the world and regarding a great catastrophe that wiped out mankind is due to this early contact.

In the case of Job I think there was probably some borrowing from the Poem of the Righteous Sufferer. However, such a man could have existed among the Hebrews as well as among the Babylonians.

I think it quite probable that the writer of Ecclesiastes could have been influenced by the Babylonian Dialogue of Pessimism, but I have my doubts about the brief parallelism found in the Gilgamesh Epic.

The character of the Old Testament wisdom literature illustrates the inteppenetration of cultures in the ancient world. After some study and comparison one might gain the impression that the Hebrews got all their culture from other peoples. We know this is not true. Their relation to others is like that of Shakespeare to his predecessors. As J.M.P. Smith says in A.J.S.L. XXXV, 10: "He took their materials and transformed them by the touch of his immortal genius. He borrowed indiscriminately on every hand, but he made what he borrowed forever his own by the magic of his skill and the grandeur of his matchless style". Just so the Hebrews did. They made what they borrowed their own; "they ethicized and sublimated, so that no contemporary literature is at all comparable to theirs".[1] They as a pupil surpassed their teachers.

From this intensive study of the wisdom literature of these three peoples - the Hebrews, the Egyptians, and the Babylonians - I am more than ever before impressed with the truth expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:9:

"That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun".

1. T.J. Meek, p. 262.

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